

# Professional Blindness And Missing The Mark ~ The Thirtieth September Movement As Seen By The Perpetrators. Between Registered Facts And Authoritative Opinions - Part Two



## *Who informed Untung about the Council of Generals? Evidence problems*

In the previous paragraph I referred to Untung's information and support network. In this paragraph I will reveal some details about it. According to Untung himself, his search for the Council of Generals began on August 4, 1965, when Lieutenant Colonel Ali Ebram, head of the intelligence service of the Tjakrabirawa regiment, informed him about the president's collapse earlier that day. Ex-Minister Subandrio calls the illness "a trifling flu" in his Memoirs, and the rumor about it a serious provocation (Perkara Untung: 55; Subandrio 13). According to Crouch the rumor originated from Brigadier General Djuhartono of the Joint Secretariat of the Functional Groups (Sekber-Golkar) and was quoted the next day in a column in the army newspaper Berita Yudha (Crouch: 96). The officers subsequently contacted by Untung for a meeting discussed the security risk posed by the rumor, probably since it might move the Council of Generals to strike first (Perkara Untung: 37, 38, 91). However, after sending his aide-de-camp First Lieutenant Dul Arief on reconnaissance, Untung concluded there was no solid evidence against the suspected generals, only publicly known professional information, as well as hearsay. Asked by the chair of the court during the first fact finding session of Untung's trial, what facts he had about the existence of the Council of Generals, Untung answered "I had no facts or evidence but I was convinced that the Council of Generals existed and indeed planned a coup. What I

received were only statements, but when needed, I can forward witnesses” (Perkara Untung 1966: 36, 164, 212). Witness Air Force Major Sujono admitted during Untung’s trial that communist team member Sjam, and the other team members were also of the opinion that there was no solid evidence (Perkara Untung: 104). These facts are absent from Roosa.

Crouch mentions the fact that “very little evidence for the council’s existence was provided” (Crouch: 106). But that is not what Untung and Sujono meant to say. Their judgments raise the question that Crouch did not put forward: what to do in the absence of solid evidence, and why act against the generals if there is no solid evidence against them. Without such evidence one cannot surprise the president with a bunch of chained up generals with the message that solid evidence is absent but they were probably preparing a coup and he should interrogate them. In my opinion, the final decision by team member Colonel Latief to kill the generals was a radical but simple solution to the evidence problem and to the related problems of how to eliminate the risk of a generals’ coup, how to prevent a major embarrassment for the president in face of failing evidence, and to prevent a counter strike by the army.

The only man who according to Untung gave him concrete information about the Council of Generals and who became the main argument for the continued hunt on the Council of Generals, was Brigadier General Supardjo from the West Java based Siliwangi division. Since Supardjo was one of the president’s trustees, and stated he was a member of the Council of Generals and knew of their plan, Untung thought him to be the man to convince the president of the coup risk and lead the delegation that would report the arrest of the generals to the president. Supardjo also claimed to possess documentation of the coup plans (Perkara Untung: 164, 168, 193). In his self-defense speech, Untung stated that he heard General Supardjo was a member of the Council of Generals as early as August 1965, and found out it was true when he checked the information with Supardjo in September 1965 (Perkara Untung: 208). In the chapter “My Testimony about G30S” of his Memoirs, Subandrio states that when he asked Supardjo if there was a Council of Generals he answered “It is true. They are busy raising new ministers” (Subandrio: 16). It is conceivable that Untung sent Supardjo to Subandrio to discuss his knowledge, as he did with other informants. Untung admitted that Supardjo had provided him with the bulk of the information he managed to collect about the Council of Generals (Perkara Untung: 164).

Initially, during the trial sessions, Untung did not mention Supardjo as the provider of evidence. However at the end of his court interrogation, at the advice of his lawyer Gumuljo, Untung called witness Major Rudhito, member of the administration of General Nasution's SUAD VI command and head of a committee that supported Untung's action. He was one of Untung's infiltrators in General Nasution's office. Rudhito first talked about Supardjo's double role.

In his exposition about Supardjo's evaluation of the G30S action included in his book, Roosa does not mention Untung's and Rudhito's references to Supardjo's double role in the prologue of the G30S (Roosa: 88-94). This absence is curious since Roosa apparently did read the pages of Untung's minutes in which Supardjo's double role is mentioned and discussed, because he refers to other items mentioned in these pages. He also missed Untung's self-defense speech in which he talks about his knowledge of that double role.

Rudhito explained how in the period from 11 to 16 September, Mohammad Amir Achsan, member of the Muslim party Nahdatul Ulama NU, provided him with reports about the Council of Generals. On 26 September four people from the Nahdatul Ulama, among them Achsan, as well as people from the IPKI, approached Untung with detailed information about the Council of Generals. They presented a tape made on 21 September 1965 of the constituting meeting of the Council of Generals in the building of the Military Justice Academy (Akademi Hukum Militer; AHM). Untung had seen and heard the tape and in court listed the names mentioned on the recording. He also stated that Achsan had assured him that the reports about the meeting as well as copies of the tape had been forwarded to the president, to the Kotrar, the Committee for the Retooling of the Government Apparatus, and finally to the Ministry of the Prosecutor General (Perkara Untung: 162, 164, 165, 170-172). Here we see the collecting of evidence about the Council of Generals by civilians and reporting it to the authorities, a contribution called for in Subandrio's subversion alarm of June 6 1965.

In his Testimony about the G30S, Subandrio states that on 26 September he had a meeting about the tape with the same four NU and IPKI people that approached Untung earlier that day. Probably Untung sent the four to Subandrio. Subandrio listened to their story, took the tape and handed it over to President Sukarno. Both listened to it. Hence, Sukarno got the tape from several sides. Subandrio commented that the fact that 4 civilians leaked highly sensitive information to outsiders appeared suspicious and it might have been a fake and an indication of

something big (Subandrio: 16-17). In this case it is clear that both Subandrio and the President were informed about the danger of the Council of Generals. In light of the lack of response on earlier reports, the tape must have been meant as a final warning to the president that a coup was imminent. The president responded by keeping it silent and not making the accusations public. He invited Yani and Suparman for meetings on 1 and 3 October without mentioning what about. Latief and Sjam did not expect any disciplinary measures to come from this, and they decided to go ahead with the assassination of the generals in order to eliminate any risk of deception.

Rudhito's summary of what he heard from the tape is interesting in this perspective. According to Rudhito the generals discussed the foundation of a Council of Generals, an agenda of action, the composition of the junta cabinet, and the date of the coup, i.e. 5 October 1965, Armed Forces Day. However, the chair of the court meeting called for attention during Rudhito's testimony. He quoted a report by the ODANG Committee of investigation about the 21 September event. According to the chair it showed that the meeting was a Commander's Call Koplats, organized and attended by the commanders of the Military Training Centers with a role in implementing the educational program for the new Tri Ubaya Sakti doctrine. During that meeting General Yani gave a briefing about the doctrine and the program (Perkara Untung: 169). The evidence and the text read by the Prosecutor are missing from the minutes, i.e. neither the list of evidence for the indictment at the beginning of the Untung minutes mentions it, nor the page where the reading of the text itself is mentioned (Perkara Untung: 22, 165). The fact that the coup rumor was rooted in Aidit's accusation against the Tri Ubaya Sakti doctrine and that the tape identified the meeting of 21 September as the founding of the Council of Generals and the discussion of the coup plan, whereas the ODANG Committee states the meeting was about the implementation of the Tri Ubaya Sakti doctrine, is significant. Coincidences can be very informative. These facts were not detected by Crouch, nor by Roosa.

#### *Who informed Njono and the PKI about the Council of Generals and Untung?*

During his recall Njono conceded that he got his information about the Council of Generals, and the counter action by the so-called progressive officers, from discussions in the CC PKI Politbiro that took place in August 1965. In its turn, the Politbiro owed its information to PKI chair Aidit who got his information from Brigadier General of Police Sutarto, head of the BPI intelligence staff of Minister

Subandrio, as well as from other sources. According to Njono, Aidit deemed Sutarto's information about the Council of Generals and Untung's action to be the most reliable available (Perkara Njono: 256). The information indicated that the danger posed by the Council of Generals was real.

During his self-defense speech Njono explained his choice for supporting "the military" as follows, "I stick to the opinion that the Council of Generals was a political situation, not just vicious slander. The following considerations are important. ... I ask the attention of the Prosecutor and the Court for the statements of the Minister of Justice Astrawinata S.H, who repeatedly pressed the people to build up social control and provide "social support" for the investigations of (Police) and Justice. [Apparently Njono referred to Subandrio's subversion June 1965 alarm when he called on the people to help police and authorities trace subversives. Njono's reference to the function of that call - building up social control and social support by reporting to police and justice; in other words uniting the people and government together in the battle against Western subversion - is interesting.]

The information I talk about, I got from political key figures and competent government officials and not only from one source but from several sources, such as the BPI and from SUAD I (Yani's staff, C.H.). I was also informed by the Lubang Buaja group that the office of the Prosecutor General, in particular Brigadier General Sunarjo, Assistant Minister for the Prosecutor General, had received information about the Council of Generals. At the end of September 1965 these reports had been supplied based on information from SUAD I and had been received by Brigadier General Sunarjo ( ...). The nature of the information provided by the BPI was precise, detailed and mentioned date, hour, place, names, agenda and other things. I ask you, if the information that was forwarded by many sources and so precise may be called "inside information" and should be conceived as slanderous rumors? Is it not conceivable that such information constituted precisely the need of social control and social support that Minister of Justice Astrawinata called for (Perkara Njono: 275-276)?"

Njono's statement shows that there were leaks in the SUAD I office that informed other authorities and agencies about the Council of Generals, including the PKI and Njono. Untung's witness Rudhito was a leak in Nasution's office. Hence, a broad network of private and official security agencies was involved in tracing subversion and tracing the Council of Generals for that matter.

Njono felt backed up by all these authorities which led him to believe he was

doing the right thing by supporting “the military” and Sukatno’s request for extra civilian manpower. However, by doing this he ignored the CC PKI Politbiro’s decision to stay out of Untung’s action and leave the matter to the president (Perkara Njono: 50, 63, 65, 70, 73). When one of the judges asked whether as a PKI member, Njono was in a position to provide support to the “military” without official accord or order from above, Njono answered “that it could happen in Jakarta, as it happened elsewhere in Indonesia” (Perkara Njono: 62-3, 79, and 102). When asked about the party background of the labor outsourced to Sujono, Njono replied that they were not PKI but came from the mass organizations (Perkara Njono: 78). Njono thus indicated that the mass organizations had self-governance and that local PKI leaders had similar freedom. This casts doubts on the general view of the PKI as a highly centralized organization. Roosa concluded from his interviews with ex-members of the PKI’s executive board that Aidit was the boss and ran a rigid regime (Roosa 2006: 153). However, although that opinion might have existed within the PKI headquarters, it was not necessarily true for local PKI branches and for the mass organizations.

#### *Decision making by the CC PKI Politbiro*

Whereas the indictment against Njono mentions the PKI decision to organize the G30S, Njono’s reconstruction of the decision making process presents a fascinating but confusing picture of the difficult situation in which the CC PKI Politbiro operated. According to Njono, PKI leader Aidit was initially prepared to actively support the action. The action plan for regions, cities and towns was ready, and flyers had been printed. The Prosecutor showed these to Njono, who admitted that they were real. However, in the end the PKI did not take a stand regarding Untung’s action, and instead left it to the president to make a decision, in the hope that he would take proper measures and either stop the movement or fight it in another way (Perkara Njono: 65, 73). The president as well as the party members were to be informed about the danger of the Council of Generals, but not about Untung’s action. There was to be no discussion at all about the military action within the party and the mass organizations, since only the president was to take action. The cause of this change in attitude was that voting for or against support of “the military” stalled in the end. Subsequently, the Politbiro dispatched a letter of information to the president in which he was asked to take action on 28 August 1965. PNI leader Ali Sastroamidjojo, the Perti, Subandrio and other parties received copies of the letter. Njono does not mention the other parties but probably referred to members of the 10 parties that signed the Bogor Declaration

of 1964. Up to 1 October 1965, there was no reply from the president, nor were any measures taken against the Council of Generals. It meant that the biro remained inactive and was getting fed up. Njono even admitted that he as well as the Politbiro had no idea whether the president had received the letter; “we heard nothing about it” (Perkara Untung: 70, 73). Apparently, the Politbiro did not know about the president inviting Yani and Suparman for a meeting.

The Politbiro did nothing to support the military while waiting for the president’s reply. Njono stated there had been no consultations whatsoever with “the military”. The action against the Council of Generals was deemed to be an internal military affair that the PKI should not become involved in (Perkara Njono: 63-64, 69). Hence, Sjam’s intermediation between the PKI and the Untung-group as mentioned by Untung during his trial must have been a matter between Aidit and Sjam (Perkara Untung: 35, 54). This information escaped Roosa’s attention, who only focused on Sjam’s 1968 confession, in which he stated that the Untung team was part of the Special Bureau of the PKI. However, by constantly keeping Subandrio informed about Sjam and blocking Sjam and Major Sujono’s efforts of getting the communist mass organizations involved in the G30S, Untung’s behavior shows that he fell outside the command of the Special Bureau. He primarily acted on behalf of Subandrio and the president, and as will become clear, Suharto.

The intellectual discussions of the Politbiro took place during three meetings in August 1965 and focused on the possible outcomes of the confrontation between “the military” and the Council of Generals. They started a few days after Untung’s meeting with Ali Ebram and from the beginning focused on Untung’s team and his strike against the Council of Generals. Apparently Aidit was certain that such a strike would take place. Even before Untung had formed a command team, Aidit already planned to take over Untung’s effort. One week later he sent two of his security men to Untung to make sure the G30S would take place. Untung could do nothing to get rid of the two.

The Politbiro was of the opinion there were two ways to prevent the Council of Generals from acting. Either the military would take pre-emptive action and report to the president, or the Politbiro would inform the president about the danger of the Council of Generals and await his response. The first option was the one favored and eventually executed by Untung. However, the Politbiro decided that the second option was the proper course of action (Perkara Njono: 73). One

of the reasons for this decision might be that any measures by the president would free them from responsibility for Untung's actions.

Three options were discussed in regards to the outcome of an encounter between the military and the Council of Generals:

- (a) The generals win and install a cabinet formed by the Council of Generals;
- (b) Untung strikes first and wins and a cabinet is installed by the Revolutionary Council. This option was embraced by Sjam in the Untung team. He was in regular contact with PKI leader Aidit who consulted him and opted for preemptive military action, provided the president had not taken measures against the Council of Generals;
- (c) a Nasakom coalition cabinet would be installed, which had the PKI's preference.

The Politburo commented that without strong military support the option of the Revolutionary Council would remain a loose political coalition of people and groups that might cooperate and reject the Council of Generals. It would not be able to fight against a military coalition or coup. Thus, a Revolutionary Council would need a strong military foundation, which was a matter of "the military" as the Politburo called Untung's team. Moreover, any measures taken by the Revolutionary Council such as de-commissioning the current cabinet and organizing general elections for a new People's Congress should also be the task of "the military". When asked who would install the Revolutionary Council, Aidit replied "the military" (Perkara Njono: 74, 77).

In all these discussions, the strength of the military foundation of the action was considered to be a deal breaker. When the chair of the court asked why the Politburo was so interested in the military substructure and what it had to do with communism, Njono replied that "it was just one of the factors that would play a role in the setup of the Council of Generals. Only when there was strong military backing, the Revolutionary Council would have *raison d'être* in the existing political situation, and then it was OK for the party as well." As one of the judges concluded, "All depended on how brave the military were and how far they were prepared to go" (Perkara Njono: 50, 52, 53, 73, and 77). He must have implicitly referred to the murder of the generals and sneakily accused the Politburo of urging the military to show their guts.

From his interviews with surviving members of the party office about the August



discussions, Roosa concludes that the PKI discussed a two-part action, and deemed the political stage more important than the military one (Roosa 2006: 94-98). Njono's reconstruction corrects this view and is more plausible than Roosa's, since a political movement wanting to seize power needs a strong military basis. The Prosecutor brushed aside Njono's reconstruction, based on Njono's own comment that although the G30S was an internal army issue "we the people (Rakjat) believed that what the G30S did was saving the revolution and the people", and "the leaders and cadres of the PKI strived after an active role." He concluded that instead of representing the real PKI stance, the letter to the president represented the wish of the majority outside the Politburo to support the military's action (Perkara Njono: 117, 127). Apparently, the Prosecutor hinted at serious dissent within the communist camp which up to now has escaped the attention of G30S analysts. With this statement, Njono suggested that Aidit's initial preference for a pre-emptive strike fit the voice of all the people who preferred action.

As far as a risk calculation was involved, the CC PKI Politburo recognized the option of a junta cabinet but apparently did not take into account a debacle such as happened on 1 October 1965 with the murder of the generals and the subsequent massacre of the Left Wing. The Politburo focused on the continuity of the Sukarno regime and bet on the president's determination to support the G30S as a revolutionary asset. As to the question what moved the sympathizers of the Revolutionary Council option to support the G30S, the comment of the Prosecutor in the Untung trial regarding the suspicious Decree No. 1 comes to mind. He called it "a rag tag of old fashioned ideas regarding a return to the dualism and liberal democracy and general elections of the 1950s (Perkara Untung: 189)." It is conceivable that a strong vote for a return to parliamentary democracy existed in the mass organizations and regions. In the 1950s the PKI experienced its electoral gains and successes, and was still an independent political force.

Why should we take Njono's confession seriously? John Roosa called him a "loose cannon" in his book *Pretext for Mass Murder* of 2006, because he constantly changed his mind, i.e. recalled the initial testimony he made and signed after his arrest. The attorney felt the same and the court accused him of committing perjury. Roosa concluded "Hence, his scenario is best put aside" (Roosa 2006: 146)." However, whether the court was right or wrong, Roosa's position robs the readers from Njono's statements, in particular regarding the connection to Subandrio's BPI, the dissent in the communist camp, the decision making process,

the cutting contact with the “military”, and the letter to the president.

*External corroboration of the Subandrio link*

Njono’s reference to the role of Minister Subandrio and his BPI office in informing the PKI about Untung’s action was corroborated by four authoritative sources. First there is Subandrio’s remark in his Memoirs that Untung told him Sjam often visited local internal army meetings about which he did not inform the team, and that Untung did not trust him. In hindsight, Subandrio commented that he suspected Sjam was a local CIA agent. This is the first instance we have of a clear external indication about dissent between Untung and Sjam within the team, and moreover shows that a report relation existed between Untung and Subandrio. Subandrio did not trust Sjam because of his double position as informant of the garrison intelligence and member of the PKI. According to Subandrio, Sjam delivered his country to the neo-colonial Nekolim forces (Subandrio 2001: 20-21). With this position he echoes Wertheim’s view of Sjam as a double agent.

Subandrio’s reference to his contact with the Untung team is corroborated by three unexpected sides. The first corroboration came from the American Director of the Far Eastern Region of ISA, Rear Admiral Blouin. On 4 October 1965 he wrote a Memorandum to Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs McNaughton, stating, “Sukarno knew what was happening all along and was lying low until he could see what was going to come on top. (Presumably, he (Sukarno, C.H.) hoped the Untung-Subandrio-Dani coup would succeed and the Army high command would no longer be a threat to his pro-Peking policy (Foreign Relations, 1964-1968, Volume XXVI: 305).” “Dani” refers to Air Force Marshall Omar Dani who despised General Yani. The Pro-Peking policy reference is to Subandrio’s flirtation with Communist China, aimed at getting Chinese support against the Western subversion threat. Air Force Marshall Omar Dani’s relation to Untung has been unclear up until now, since the Untung and Njono minutes only provide faint information and Dani himself remained silent about it in his trial as well in his Evaluation which is included in Roosa’s *Pretexts for Mass Murder of 2006*. Moreover, Crouch’s book *The Army and Politics in Indonesia (1978)* about the Subandrio trial, does not touch on this issue either; neither do Subandrio’s Memoirs. Interestingly, Subandrio admits in his memoirs that Dani’s trial did not regard the G30S (Subandrio 2001: 14). Most likely, Suharto ordered this change in the trial to prevent sensitive information about the BPI’s role in the hunt on the Council of Generals from becoming public knowledge since it would spoil the

attack on the PKI.

The second independent source corroborating Njono's reference to Subandrio is former RPKAD commander General Kemal Idris. In an interview in 1993, he talked about the so-called Supersemar event of 11 March 1966 which gave Suharto the opportunity to seize power. On that day, Idris and RPKAD troops took to the palace in Jakarta where the cabinet was meeting. He explained he was not after the president that day, but after Subandrio because "I believed him to be the man behind the G30S (Wawancara, in Forum Keadilan, No. 7, Tahun II, 22 Juli 1993: 34)."

This statement is corroborated in one of my interviews with general Nasution from 1993. He was one of the main targets of Untung's action, but managed to escape and survive. In that interview, he told me what happened a few days after 1 October, during a change-of-command ceremony that Subandrio attended as Inspector General of the Armed Forces. Whereas Subandrio usually arrived at such events in a fancy car from his ministry, this time he arrived in a Bren-carrier manned by heavily armed soldiers, probably Tjakrabirawa Lapis Baja soldiers who usually protected the president's transports. None of the attending commanders shook hands with him. They simply ignored his presence because they saw him as the man behind the G30S. Nasution felt sad for the man. Nasution's statement is remarkable since he had a long history of hating and mistrusting the PKI and Subandrio as treacherous partners in the Indonesian revolution.

Why should we believe statements from an American Rear Admiral and two outspoken Indonesian PKI opponents like General Nasution and General Kemal Idris, all pointing not to the PKI but to a completely different external driving agent? The answer is simple, because as PKI opponents they had no reason to spare that party. Then again, Subandrio was hated like hell in army circles because of his recent advances to the PKI which he saw as the anchor of Indonesia's future, as indicated by a CIA Memorandum of December 1965 (Crouch 1978). It is conceivable that these generals viewed Subandrio as a PKI ally and thus as a man who would deliver Indonesia to the PKI. However, it is equally conceivable that the connection between Untung's team and Subandrio and the authorities was widely known, as Blouin's Memorandum about the Untung-Subandrio-Omar Dani coup indicates, making the three judgments common sense.

**Part Three:** [Professional Blindness And Missing The Mark ~ The Thirtieth](#)

# Professional Blindness And Missing The Mark ~ The Thirtieth September Movement As Seen By The Perpetrators. Between Registered Facts And Authoritative Opinions - Part Three



## *The Finale - Aidit's position at Halim and the role of General Supardjo*

Air Force Major Sujono was the only witness in the trials against Njono and Untung that spoke about the presence of PKI leader Aidit at Halim airport on 1 October 1965. His testimony is packed with mistakes unmasked by Untung. The lies, twists and spoils he produced probably reflect his tension. Sujono's statement that the meetings started on 6 September 1965 is fascinating, since Untung and all the other attendants said the meetings started in August, most likely on 14 August (Perkara Untung: 91). It is

unclear why Sujono mentions a different date but it illustrates the way he rummaged with data and events in court.

Speaking about the events surrounding Aidit's presence and role at Halim airport on 1 October 1965, this became obvious. Initially he told the court that on 30 September 1965 General Supardjo visited Central Command Penas on his own at

8 PM after his arrival from Kalimantan, which Untung corroborated. But later he said it happened at 1.30 [probably afternoon] (Perkara Untung: 95, 115, 118). Supardjo arrived in a small sedan and had informed Sujono that he was to pick up Aidit and General Pranoto and bring them to Sjam's house where they were informed that Aidit was to be brought to Halim. The remaining part of Sujono's testimony does not mention Pranoto, but focuses on Aidit's transport. Neither Untung nor other witnesses refer to Pranoto accompanying Aidit to Halim, hence his presence is debatable. The car that brought Aidit to Halim was a small Toyota sedan from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was driven by Air Force 1st Sergeant Muljono. For the occasion the driver had been made Minister Subandrio's personal representative (Perkara Untung: 95-6). The suggestion is raised whether Subandrio, who was in Sumatra at the time, knew about Aidit's presence at Halim and changing the meeting place from the palace to Halim. However, Untung denied this when questioned by his lawyer about it. He simply stated that on 30 September he was at Penas, i.e. the command center in Jakarta, with Supardjo, Sjam and Pono whereas Sujono was at the base camp Lubang Buaja (Perkara Untung: 118).

Although he did not mention the time of the meeting, his answer concerned Sujono's statement about Supardjo's whereabouts on the evening of 30 September. Thus, the meeting between Sujono and Supardjo could not have taken place. The question is who ordered Aidit's transport to Halim and who escorted him? In his own trial, Sjam gave one answer. He told the court he had ordered Sujono to bring Aidit to Halim (Roosa 2006, Appendix II: 258). Possibly Sujono hid his connection with Sjam, with whom he had worked together since July 1965. He did the same when he denied having attended the team meetings about the Revolutionary Council (Perkara Untung: 99). The question whether Subandrio was involved in the transport or not remains unanswered. Sujono's suggestive but unfounded testimony about Subandrio's connection to Aidit's presence at Halim was not corroborated by others. The attention Sujono gave in his testimony to Supardjo's role in the 30 September events in his testimony is intriguing. First there is Sujono's witness statement that Supardjo told him on the evening of 30 September that the president would be expected at Halim the next morning between 7 and 8 AM (Perkara Untung: 116). The second and related fact is that Supardjo arrived at the palace port in Jakarta in the morning of 1 October at 8 AM, along with Lieutenant Colonel Heru Atmodjo, an observant from Air Force Marshall Omar Dani. They intended to meet with the president. However, they

were refused entrance and it took some time before they were notified that the president was at Halim, and it took even longer to get there and meet the president. Hence, Sujono's statement about Supardjo's information regarding the president's whereabouts the next morning was beside the point. Sujono once again mixed up his testimony when he said that on the morning of 1 October, he encountered four officers that were supposed to meet the president - General Supardjo, Major Bambang, Major Sukirno, and Lieutenant Colonel Heru Atmodjo. When Sujono asked them what they were up to, they replied they were on their way to the palace (Perkara Untung: 116). Apparently, the four men were not informed about the changed meeting point, which contradicts Sujono's statement about Supardjo's order. Supardjo's evaluation of the G30S in Roosa's book states that he met with the team on the evening of 30 September, which corroborates Untung's statement, and discussed the actions of the next day (Roosa 2006: 228). If that meeting did indeed take place, it is difficult to understand why none of the team members informed him of the change in the meeting place and time, or discussed what to report to the president. After all, he was a key person in the reportage to the president. The information reveals chaos and sloppy preparations for the abduction of the generals in the days before 1 October and on the morning of that day. The court did not dive into this puzzle. They simply added the names and the context to their evidence list for subsequent trials.

There is no connection between Supardjo's view of the events of the evening of 30 September in his evaluation of the G30S and the evidence provided by the Untung minutes. I found no disproof of Aidit's presence at Halim, and encountered no references to Aidit's role in the formulation of Decree No. 1. Neither the court nor the defense questioned Sujono about this matter.

However, Aidit's presence at Halim would have enabled him direct and personal contact with Sjam about the G30S, Decree No. 1 and the Revolutionary Council. Indeed, in his coup testimony Sjam explained Aidit's presence at Halim as "to facilitate the connection between central command [cenko] and Aidit, and for control over the movement's plan (Roosa 2006: 258)." In the end, Aidit did not meet the president at Halim. In the afternoon of 1 October, after the broadcast of Decree No. 1, news broke that the decree was viewed as counter-revolutionary (Perkara Untung: 75). General Suharto's coup accusation against the G30S on that same evening confirmed that message.

Aidit flew to Jogjakarta, without the chance of returning to Jakarta. It looks as if he had lost control of the situation and fled to a safe haven in Central Java in a

panic. He was captured in November 1965 and was unceremoniously executed and buried in a forgotten place. His testimony would have been painful for the G30S trials since he knew about the Council of Generals and had all the available information about their plans. At this point it is important to realize that the courts did not get into the question of the existence of the Council of Generals and the coup plan, but cautiously evaded the whole subject. Initially Untung helped the court by stating that he had no solid evidence of the Council of Generals' coup plan. However, later he had Rudhito, his infiltrator in Nasution's office, testify about the recording of the founding meeting of the Council of Generals on 21 September. The court countered Rudhito by producing the minutes of the meeting which showed the meeting was about the curricular preparations for the Tri Ubaja Sakti doctrine. Moreover, further investigation of the Council of Generals' coup plan would have undermined the aim of the G30S trials and would have involved the president, who was still spared from suspicion and accusations against him in 1966 and 1967.

*The radio broadcasts, the reportage to the president and the president's orders*  
After the 7 AM News on 1 October 1965, Untung broadcast a message written by himself via radio RRI Jakarta. It explained that he, as a member of the Tjakrabirawa palace guard, had rescued the president from the Council of Generals' coup plan (Perkara Untung: 86, 87). This message has caused wonder since it significantly differs from the decree text broadcast after the 2 PM News. The two messages reflect the division of labor in the team. Untung organized and executed the abduction of the generals and made it public via radio RRI Jakarta. Sjam was responsible for the G30S, the Revolutionary Council and Decree No. 1, and reported to the Presidium of the G30S and presumably to PKI leader Aidit.

After Untung's radio message, General Supardjo and Lieutenant Colonel Heru Atmodjo, representative of Marshall Omar Dani, were ordered to report to the president. Due to the misunderstanding about the place and time of the meeting, the reportage eventually took place at Halim somewhere between 9 and 11 AM. They met with the president and Untung's regiment commander General Sabur. Supardjo presented the president with his evidence about the danger of the Council of Generals, the abductions and the plans for the Thirtieth September Movement and the Revolutionary Council. The president reacted calm and neutral, and after some reflection on the information he received, he put a stop to the troop movements and the activities planned by the G30S (Perkara Untung:

33-4). He refused Supardjo's request to approve the actions, but did not condemn them either. Untung obeyed the president's order with regard to the troops and instructed his aid de camp 1st Lieutenant Dul Arief to bring the troops back to base camp. It robbed the G30S from its troops, and the Revolutionary Council from its defense force. Untung, wanting the G30S to end, must have been pleased.

It appears as if Untung thought that transferring the president's order to Sjam, Supardjo and Heru would be enough to stop the preparations for the broadcast of Decree No. 1, the G30S's political program. However, Sjam refused to accept the stop order. He pressed on with the decree's broadcast and discussed the text changes necessitated by the order with Untung, Supardjo and Heru (Perkara Untung: 34, 52-3). Apparently Sjam still counted on the president's cooperation since he had not condemned the G30S and in his own broadcasts of that day did not mention the G30S or any coup attempt. It indicated that the president was working on a political solution, which gave the group time to discuss a proper reaction that would not endanger the president's position. Sjam pushed for continuing with the operation and Untung does not mention any protest from the military team members or Supardjo in his testimony. Supardjo's evaluation contained in Roosa's book (2006) does not mention the discussion at all.

Why would Sjam have insisted on the broadcast of Decree No. 1? And were changes made in the text of the decree? The best way to answer these questions is to present the main parts of Untung's court interrogation about the final text.

#### *Untung's interrogation about the discussions surrounding Decree No. 1*

Untung's minutes provide a thrilling picture of the discussion between Untung and the court about the puzzle surrounding the broadcast of Decree No. 1. It shows Untung's subservient position in the G30S and the depth of the disagreement with Sjam about the goals of the operation and the role of the president in it. It was clear to Untung that the president's stop orders had to be obeyed. Since Supardjo had asked the president to approve the abduction of the generals, it is plausible that Sjam's draft of the decree, would have mentioned the president. Because the president did not give his OK and instead stopped both actions, the main discussion point was what to do? Continue or not? Not going forward created a problem because, according to witness 1st Lieutenant Ngadimo, starting mid-September a range of selected mid-level and lower rank commanders in the regencies of East Java had been urged to listen to radio RRI



Jakarta since there would be an announcement about the erection of the Revolutionary Council in Jakarta (Perkara Untung: 126-7).

The chair's first question was "who planned the text of Decree No. 1"? To which Untung replied "Sjam did". The chair continued "Thus you only signed the decree, since before it had already been decided that you would become commander of the G30S"? Untung answered "Yes. But there had already been discussion about the text of the Decree". The chair asked "who included the terms regarding the meaning and purpose of "decommissioning the cabinet"? Untung replied "it was Sjam who edited the decree as a whole". The chair subsequently asked "Hence it was Sjam who so zealously conceived of the intention that the generals should be cleared away and the like, and that the power would fall into the hands of the Revolutionary Council causing the Dwikora cabinet to become decommissioned?" Untung answered: "Yes, with the suggestions of the people that attended the meeting". The chair continued "The authority of the Dwikora cabinet reached from Sabang to Merauke, whereas you only covered Jakarta and environment, but the Decree promised to form revolutionary councils in every region of the Republic of Indonesia. Who for example said that regional revolutionary councils would be formed in the regions and that there would be no problems?" Untung explained that "Decree No. 1 would call on the regions to constitute revolutionary councils in their jurisdiction. There was evidence that it would work, depending on the region. In the meeting Sjam had assured the regions would join in the moment the Decree was published." The chair asked Untung "how could Sjam be so sure"? Untung answered that "Sjam said nothing about the reasons behind his conviction. He only said that he had the information." The judge asked "As a commander, did you not have to know what the real situation was in the regions?" Untung answered that "to me the formation of regional revolutionary councils was not the first priority. First priority was the cleanup of the Council of Generals. That was the prime purpose of the G30S." (Perkara Untung: 51-2). A statement similar to the last one can be found on page 35 of Untung's minutes.

The judge replied that "the Decree showed that the aim of the G30S was broader than just the cleanup of the Council. There was also decommissioning the Dwikora cabinet. If that was not your prime aim, why did you not change the text of the Decree?" Untung answered that "The cleanup was the prime purpose. To that aim the decommissioning of the cabinet was necessary, in order to prevent two state organizations [i.e. revolutionary council and the cabinet, C.H.] from

competing for power. That would hamper the cleanup.” The chair then asked Untung “Hence the Revolutionary Council would dictate the Commander in Chief, President Sukarno”? Untung answered “No”. The chair continued “why was the Decree broadcast after the president had seized power?” Untung replied “the president had to be saved. Finishing the cleaning task was the work of the Revolutionary Council. After finishing that job, the leadership would be returned to the president (Perkara Untung: 51-3).” In this last statement we again recognize Aidit’s point of view that as long as the president was not absolutely safe, the greater cause was the president’s safety, not his orders.

Untung’s stance regarding the priorities of the G30S is reflected by his responses to Sjam’s ideas from the start. His own plan was to get rid of the top of the Council of Generals and then hand the case over to the president. He went along with Sjam’s plan for a G30S that would put the Revolutionary Council in place, because it was fine with him if the council finished the job. The remaining part was unnecessary. His argument might have been that as soon as the president stepped in and reliable commanders and governors replaced the removed ones, any further cleaning of the Council of Generals’ clientele in the regions would be the president’s task.

On the other hand, it is conceivable that Sjam in his turn really was convinced that the regions would cooperate. We know the real outcome. That same eve, General Suharto condemned the G30S as a coup attempt and started a relentless and murderous war on its legacy and that of President Sukarno.

Roosa’s picture of the discussion is interesting: “The military officers in the movement who were meeting at Halim (Untung, Latief, Sujono) were ready to call off the operation before they knew about Suharto’s counter attack. Sukarno had instructed them to quit late that morning. Unlike Aidit and Sjam, they were willing to abide by the president’s instructions.” and “The officers were already angry with Sjam for betraying their original intentions with his radio announcement decommissioning Sukarno’s cabinet” (Roosa 2006: 221, 222). Roosa gives no source references nor do Untung’s minutes. However Untung’s statements contain ground for some doubts about Roosa’s judgment.

*Did Untung’s team ever opt for a coup?*

Two last puzzling elements in the history of the G30S and the Revolutionary Council remain. The man who read the decree text after the 2 PM News and protested against the absence of the president’s name in the text, was forced to

read it with the explanation that “the president was not in power anymore”. This situation refers to at least a coup intention and had already been touched upon by Sujono when he told the court that Latief and Sjam had once stated in a meeting that the president should be pushed aside (*menggeser*), and that Untung seemed to agree with that view. Sjam had promised to pass the idea on to his chair - PKI leader Aidit. However, no matter the answer, it would not change anything in the setup of the G30S (*Perkara Untung*: 99). The subject did not return in the following team meetings, which could mean Aidit rejected the idea. At a certain moment in Untung’s trial the chair of the court suddenly asked Untung “Who had the idea to overthrow the government during the meetings?” Untung answered “that idea came from all the attendants.” He quickly corrected his statement by saying that “actually overthrowing the government had never been mentioned during the meetings (*Perkara Untung*: 35).” However, at some point one of the witnesses was asked to speak louder since Untung had hearing problems. Thus one can imagine that Untung did not hear exactly what the chair asked him. It brings to mind a method used by police interrogators to get people to tell “the truth” i.e. what the interrogator wants to hear, by hitting them hard on the ears. However, Untung’s persistence about the president’s safety and the report to the president in the morning of 1 October at Halim make Sujono’s comment improbable.

### *The missing Suharto link*

In his testimony about the G30S, Subandrio stated that General Suharto had planned to start a movement by exploiting Latief and manipulating Untung’s group when General Yani’s group still had no knowledge of Untung’s intentions. He gave no explanation for these accusations. From his exposition it becomes clear that Suharto had decided to infiltrate the G30S.

Somewhere in September 1965 General Suharto asked General Yoga Sugama, member of the Kostrad Command, to ask Yani’s intelligence assistant General S. Parman, whether he had any knowledge and information about the abduction plan against them, but was disappointed. Subsequently Sugama promised to keep Suharto informed should such information become available. Apparently up to 1 October no such information reached Parman and the Yani staff, and both were fully unaware of the action that would kill them (*Subandrio*: 4). This comment may explain why both Untung and Latief approached Suharto before Action Day 1 October, to talk about the date and plan of action. Latief remained vague in his writings about the meeting with Suharto, as did Suharto himself, and Untung only

told Subandrio about his meeting with Suharto and the man's positive reaction to his plan. My personal inclination is to refrain from speculations and go no further than the supposition that Suharto facilitated Untung and Latief after having probed the lack of alertness on Yani's side regarding Untung's action. He then let the dice roll until his chances and priorities became clear. Nasution's escape became the turning point. Subandrio's hunch is important because it shows a third line to an external authority within the G30S operation. That line was separate from the Subandrio and Aidit lines and eventually blocked these two lines and opened the road to a new order. It is unclear what would have happened if Nasution had been killed too. In that case, Untung, Subandrio and Aidit would have been in a much stronger position to reach their objectives. Whether Nasution's escape was part of the Suharto game is unknown, but his presence at Kostrad Command definitely helped in staging his coup. He was the highest ranking military in Indonesia at the time and authorized Suharto to claim his position as Yani's successor as adjunct army chief in light of the new emergency, and launch his coup accusation against the G30.

#### *Was President Sukarno involved in the G30S?*

Of course President Sukarno was involved in Untung's operation, if not actively than certainly passively. Untung's operation aimed at rescuing the president from an army coup and Untung broadcast that message publicly after the 7 AM News of 1 October 1965. Moreover, Untung reported to the president on 1 October about his actions, and that reportage had been planned since August 1965. Sukarno took measures against the abduction and the G30S, but did not condemn them. Hence the president was at least the benefactor of the operations. However, it is unlikely the president had any foreknowledge since the team members and the PKI did not want to inform him preemptively.

The so-called Widjanarko report raised a lot of discussion in the first years after the G30S. It was made public in an English translation and painted a picture of the G30S as a palace intrigue with the president in it up to his neck. The report contained President Sukarno's adjutant Colonel Bambang Widjanarko statements to his interrogator about the president's plan to dismiss commander in chief of the army General Yani. According to Widjanarko, the president had asked Lieutenant Colonel Untung on 4 August 1965, the day of the president's so-called collapse, "whether he was prepared, if ordered, to take action against the disloyal generals," and Untung had replied that he was (Crouch 1978: 120; Karni 1974: 14, 17-19, Dake 1973: 368-369). According to Crouch, Dake stated that on the

31st of July the president sent a telegram to PKI leader Aidit and CC PKI member Njoto with orders to return to Jakarta. Upon their return they were informed of Sukarno's decision to act against the generals. On 23 September the president supposedly ordered Tjakrabirawa commander General Sabur to act as soon as possible, based on information from General Yani's assistant General Mursjid and others about "a disloyal Council of Generals which opposed Sukarno's policies". Sabur was instructed to contact Assistant Attorney General Sunarjo to prepare a notice of dismissal and check the measure with Yani's colleagues in the armed forces (Crouch 1978: 120-121). Untung's and Njono's minutes contain no information about these measures.

From Untung's minutes we know that he started his search for companions after being informed about the president's collapse and the discussion about the durability of the president in army circles. Subsequently he and garrison commander Colonel Latief, based on their own reconnaissance, had informed the president's trustees about the danger of the Council of Generals, to which they got no reply. It is likely that in view of the lack of solid evidence mentioned by Untung, the reports remained private. It was actually the tape recording of the so-called founding meeting of the Council of Generals forwarded by Minister Subandrio on the 26th of September that alarmed Sukarno. He invited Yani for a meeting on 1 October and General Suparman on 3 October. The G30S blocked that agenda with their failed arrest operation and the broadcast of 1 October.

Actually, Untung's own record of the time schedule of the prologue to the G30S does not substantially differ from Widjanarko's testimony. It is conceivable that Untung concealed his contacts with the president, for instance in order to spare his boss political trouble and persecution. However, both the Untung and Njono minutes show an essential difference compared to the Widjanarko document. Untung as well as PKI leader Aidit made it clear that the president was not to be informed about the plans for arrests and the G30S out of fear that he would put a stop to the effort, and because he should not be involved in the G30S before the operational goals had been reached. It would save him from accusations of involvement and political damage. The fear of a presidential stop order appeared realistic. The president stopped the military operations as well as the planned G30S after the 1 October murders. On the 6th of October he denounced the G30S as revolutionary adventurism after it appeared that the G30S was under siege by Suharto. Although Sukarno never called the G30S a coup, he also never took

measures to protect the officers who risked their lives for him. Sukarno was and remained a Jacobin who knew when and how to play the cards he was dealt. At the end of 1965, when the dismantling of the PKI and the genocide of the leftist legacy was in full swing, the president started speculating about building a new PKI. In hindsight it appears that the Widjanarko report could have led to the persecution of the president, Untung and Tjakrabirawa commander General Sabur. Suharto seems to have dropped the document because he thought it was too early for a move against the president. Besides, the Untung and Njono cases offered enough chances to manipulate the evidence and kill grass root support for the PKI and Sukarno. When Sukarno's abdication started in 1967 the Widjanarko report did not play a role.

Fear of an army coup among president Sukarno's entourage and fundamental dissent about the correct way to rescue the PKI's as well as the president's legacy, threw Indonesia in the cleft of horror and mass murder. Whether there was a plan for an army coup is still unclear. Untung's effort to put an end to the unrest failed, and under Aidit's auspices the G30S raised suspicion about the nature of the strike against the Council of Generals. President Sukarno proved unable to solve the crisis and because of Sukarno's relentless attack on his legacy, was unable to gather the support he needed to go through with his plans for Indonesia. In the end, conspiracy theories and conflicting interests of the president and the army led to the final clash. The year 1965 had started off hopeful with the promise of a revolution that would finally bring the army under state and political control but ended in famine, poverty and horror. The picture painted in the previous pages show that the existing Suharto coup theories fail. They lack explanations for how and why the G30S came into being, how Untung's rescue operation was undermined, and how conflicting internal dynamics within the command team ultimately led to the failure of the rescue operation.

### *Conclusion*

The action as planned by Untung for October 1, 1965 was meant to protect the president from a supposed army coup, but turned out to be a dramatic failure. Literature still refers to the events with a strange mixture of confusing terms: from a palace revolution to a coup, an attempted coup or failed coup and finally as a coup by bodyguard Untung, and a communist coup. That the action may have had a different intent has never been seriously considered since the 1970s. In this chapter I have ignored all those characterizations and instead focused on the minutes from the trials: What did the accused and witnesses have to say for

themselves and about Untungs and Njonos actions, their intentions and background.

Untung, head of president Soekarno's security since 1965, was considered the military leader of the G30S by the court and General Soeharto. According to the charges, Njono was the political leader. His leadership was determined by the PKI's Central Committee. Being an ex-rebel from the Madiun Affair in 1948, Untung was set by his superior and later public prosecutor Soeharto to be the military leader. In other words, Untung was the executive commander of the supposed coup and Njono the communist leader.

The real course of events leading up to the social and political processes that eventually led to the G30S, was very different from what Soeharto suggested, according to both the Untung and Njono testimonies. During their trials, both had expressed the intent to refute the lies of the court in their statements. Instead of worrying about the prejudice in Crouch and Roosa's statement that "criminals always deny their crimes", and Roosa's judgment that "the Njono minutes are better left unread", I tried to organize both defendants statements in such a way that they would tell a coherent story. This way, it could be checked against existing and confirmed information about the contemporary circumstances in 1965.

According to Untung, the Head of Intelligence of the palace guard had informed him in early August 1965 that there was talk in an army publication of the president suddenly falling ill. It was part of an ongoing discussion in army circles about the sustainability of president Soekarno's position. In his My testimony about the G30S, Soebandrio wrote that the illness was just an innocent cold, but Untung spoke to colleagues from Jakarta security circles about the background of this talk. What if these discussions about the president's position meant there was talk of a coup, and about the succession of the president? PKI leader Aidit's assistant Sjam Kamarusaman had remarked that "if people felt Soekarno should go, then that's what should happen". Untung and his team members were determined to fight that idea. This led to a division in the team. Untung tried to keep Aidit's two assistants, who were present at the meetings of his team, out of his action as much as he could. The team discussions were partially the result of tensions between Soekarno and the army leadership earlier in 1965, but also of internal issues of Untungs team. The army leadership had turned against the Nasakom program introduced early in 1965 which was supposed to lead the 1965

reforms. Untung and his men agreed with that standpoint. However, they also wanted to follow their order - research the rumors about an army coup - by executing a well-organized action against the generals who they would bring to the president unharmed. Aidit and his assistants could only be in the way of such an action.

As early as May 1965, Aidit had been critical of an army workshop held in late April in which the Tri Ubaja Sakti (TUS - Three Mandates) doctrine had been discussed. According to that doctrine, the army had three tasks: Standard defense against foreign subversion, defense against internal subversion, and guiding and guarding the population in war time. The president had accepted the doctrine as instrumental in the planned attack against northern neighbor Malaysia. The doctrine centralized a system that already had been in practice for many years in production and export regions: A double function of the army that included protecting rice cultivation and consulting the population. Apart from a small hiatus between 1962 and 1964, there had been a state of emergency since the regional uprisings of 1957: Controlling internal subversion as a result of foreign subversion in production and export regions, as well as communication with the local population, had become core tasks of the army. The PKI's unions work in those regions was considered internal subversion. Both the army and the PKI were in daily contact with the local population via guidance committees and thus competitors. The TUS doctrine centralized the overseeing and directing of those committees. During the 1965 reforms communication between parts of the government and the political parties was to be led by Nasakom teams. Those two trajectories were getting in each other's way. To complicate matters further, the army leadership was against using Nasakom teams. Using them, they argued, was proof that one of the goals of the reforms was to solidify and acknowledge the role of the PKI in the political system, which was undesirable.

Unfortunately for Aidit, Untung and his men did not want to cooperate. They were on a secret security assignment and refused any form of cooperation with Aidit's assistants. That is, until they received orders from higher up to work with Aidit and his assistants at the end of September. These orders did not come from generals who were secret members of the PKI or sympathized with that party, but from veteran, professional generals who shunned the PKI. In cooperating with Aidit and Untung they saw an opportunity to compromise both sides and attempt to seize power in order to free Indonesia from a left wing president for good. In



other words, a repeat and final conclusion of the 1948 Madiun affair. Soeharto and the garrison commander of Jakarta aspired to be key figures in this coup. Up until that point, neither had given any real signs of political involvement. But from the end of September they showed their true colors and the battle was on against the PKI and the Madiun rebels pardoned by Soekarno. Soeharto actually called it Operation Madiun in private.

Untung's search for clues of an army coup took place amongst heated discussions and Untung was determined not to be influenced by those. This was another reason for Untung to refuse cooperation with Aidit's assistants, who had approached him with a proposal for restoring Nasakom as a symbol of politics and armed forces. Instead Untung focused on his orders to find out the truth about an army coup. He mainly focused on the army leadership in the circles of army leader Yani and general Nasution, minister of Defense and Security. The curious thing about focusing on Yani and his staff was that it was common knowledge that they were loyal to the president and politically neutral. Looking at them closer reveals that all of them were in favor of a Western oriented model of ideology free professionalization of the armed forces, and the army in particular; exactly what Aidit was fervently against. Aidit was old fashioned in this respect, a child of the pre-war left wing struggle against the colonizer. He refused to acknowledge what Western trained Yani did for the postwar construction of Republican armed forces. He also ignored Japanese Peta influences and other Japanese organizations, while Soeharto was trained in those during the Second World War.

As becomes clear from Njono's testimony, by the end of August 1965 and after three weeks of intense debate led by Aidit, the CC PKI Politburo had decided not to support Untung and his men. Untung was fervently against cooperation, after all. Instead, a letter was sent by the CC PKI Politburo to president Soekarno about the danger of a generals coup, with the request to handle it personally and swiftly. The PKI never received a reply. Possibly the letter was intercepted before it ever reached the president. Aidit did not involve himself with Untung while awaiting a response to his letter.

Untung continued looking for reinforcements of his troops in August and September. Previously he had his own palace guard battalion at his disposal, as well as the 1st Infantry Brigade from the Jakarta garrison led by colonel Latief, a member of Untung's team. These units were supplemented with troops from the military airport Halim under air force major Sujono's command. These three units

were definitely not cores of communist infiltration; they were the heart of the presidential security system. Admission into these units meant a thorough investigation of a recruits political and military history. The palace guard especially, but Latiefs and Sujonos units as well, were furiously opposed to communist influences. So in reality, these three units formed the inner three circles of presidential security. The cooperation was not the result of Untungs search for support, as is widely suggested by Soeharto and Western literature about the G30S. On the contrary, it was an indication that Untungs operation put the presidential security system on high alert. The affairs concerning Untung and Njono make clear that the president was not always asked for permission before actions.

From the minutes, it appears that until October 1, Untung did not have solid evidence against the generals and was debating whether it would be fruitful to bother the president with unsubstantiated suspicions of a coup. However, by late September 1965 anonymous initiatives kept the case against the generals going. Apparently Untungs investigation was not as secret as he would have liked, as even members of the National Front appeared to know about it. On September 26, a group of four National Front members presented a recording of the founding assembly of the Council of Generals on 20 September 1965. The voices of general Yani and general S. Parman were clearly audible. It is unclear from Untungs minutes how this recording came into existence. If it was a fake, it was clearly the work of a professional intelligence service.

Untungs mentor, minister Soebandrio, was suspicious of the recording but still delivered it to the president. After listening to it, the president asked to see Yani and S. Parman in separate meetings; Yani on October 1 and S. Parman on October 3. On September 28 and while Untung was away for work, a complete switch of goals and approach took place within the team. The generals were to be assassinated and disappear, and PKI leader Aidit was asked to write down his thoughts about the political and governmental future of Indonesia and submit them to the president. After returning, Untung accepted these changes without debate. The chairman of the court asked Untung why he 'went along with that'. Untungs reply was that parts of the new plan seemed useful to him in his action against the generals. He was not interested in the formation of a Revolutionary Council in order to execute a complete political reformation under Nasakom. However, he was interested in removing supporters of the council of generals

from cabinet and parliament. Untung's response to the changes is interesting because up until that point, he was fervently against killing the generals and working with AIDIT, and he was supported in this by his military team members. So why would he and the others suddenly take the bait, when surrendering the generals to the president was regulatory correct and the only civilized solution in light of the lack of evidence against them? Even without proof, the president could still consider how to handle this situation. Whatever the reason, Untung accepted the changes without protest. It appears that the anonymous suggestions were actually orders that had to be followed. And they were. On September 30 the details were finalized and the operation was named 30 September Movement. On the night of September 30 Untung's team member Latief visited General Soeharto. The next day, Soeharto and his friend and colleague General Umar Wirahadikusuma got together in Soeharto's office and received reports about the day. Commanders from the Jakarta region also stopped by to discuss advancements. Untung received their verdict, which deemed the G30S counter-revolutionary, by anonymous telex that afternoon. The game was over. From the anonymous intervention in Untung's operation, the meeting between Latief and Soeharto, and Soeharto's meeting with the commanders it appears there was a clear line of action.

At first, Soeharto supported Untung and his men, but the lack of solid evidence against the generals caused him to intervene and turn it into a direct attack on the army leadership. Finally, Soeharto and his ad hoc inspection committee intervened when on 1 October the president postponed judgment during his discussion with General Supardjo who reported to him about Untung's action. and put a stop to the operations, while AIDIT still went ahead and had Decree No. 1 broadcast by Radio RRI Jakarta. This Decree announced the assembly of the military 30 September Movement which would erect a Revolutionary Council in order to get rid of supporters of the council of generals in government and regional governments, and restore democracy through general elections. That broadcast was apparently what Soeharto and his group were hoping for. The prosecutor later judged that the text was "old news" and referred back to the situation of the mid-1950s. However, since there was a presidential system in place since 1959, and the decree was calling for a different system which appeared to have the support of executive troops, this movement had to be stopped forcefully. First by anonymous telex to Untung, then via a coup accusation broadcast by Radio RRI Jakarta. In both texts, Soeharto distanced

himself from Untung and his men and began his take-over.

Untungs team fell apart and Sjam en S. Pono went into hiding. Aidit was put on a plane to Yogyakarta, but he did not find a safe haven there. Suddenly, Aidits popularity had abandoned him. He found himself in the position of refugee and wanted man. He was executed by army troops while on the run after a few weeks. In the meantime, Soeharto had seized power. It is worth mentioning that president Soekarno did not get involved in the conclusion of the G30S affair and did nothing to stop the murders that started with Soehartos consent. During the October 6 cabinet assembly the president denounced the G30S as counter revolutionary, thereby endorsing the earlier verdict of the Soeharto committee. Soekarno did make some ironic remarks about Soehartos coup accusations. He declared those to be nonsense. In late 1965 Soekarno proposed the establishment of a new PKI. In short, the president was as ruthless as he had been in 1948, but this time he did not gain any support for his proposals.

Looking back, there are two main conclusions. First of all, the Njono minutes give sharp insights into the events leading up to 1 October 1965. At the end of August 1965, the CC PKI Politburo distanced themselves from Untungs action and refused cooperation. They also sent a letter to president Soekarno warning him against the council of generals, with the request to take the matter into his own hands and act swiftly. The Politburo sent a copy of that letter to the 10 main Nasakom parties and as a result Untung did not gain political support for his action. Untung however was not waiting for that; on the contrary. The Politburo no doubt had it in the back of their minds that Untungs action could be stopped by the president. Aidit stuck to the decision made by the CC PKI Politburo on August 28 and did not take action until late September. His assistants did not do anything either. This is clear from the haste with which a political program was developed and discussed between 28 and 30 September, and the panicky discord and discussions between Aidit and Sjam about the list of Revolutionary Council members. In short, Aidit and Sjam were completely unprepared for the events that were pressed on them late in September 1965. They were waiting for a letter from president Soekarno that never came. It was the attitude of neat, civilized people who did not want to ruffle any feathers.

Decree No. 1 and the two ordinances should be considered last minute products. Interestingly enough, it is clear from reactions to the broadcast of the second version of Decree No. 1 on October 1, that radio and newspapers were counting

on publication of the text as prepared for the president. However, the president rejected the first version for direct publication. Aidits urge to broadcast a second version after the president had postponed judgment of the first version, may have something to do with the fact that Aidit was informed by Sjam that people across the country were waiting for his text. By trusting Untung, Aidit may have made the mistake of broadcasting a second version, perhaps in the assumption he had the support of the president and that Soeharto - being Untungs superior - was not a threat. So Soeharto's turnaround came after receiving the broadcast of Decree No. 1. This was not just Soehartos doing, it was the ad hoc committee that together with Soeharto and the Jakarta commanders acted on Untungs reports. It was this commission that developed further initiatives. This committee was not a permanent one, it existed for the occasion and did not make any public appearances as such. Soeharto spoke also for the others after he had been given permission to do so.

In conclusion, it is clear that the minutes from Untung and Njonos trials contain valuable material and merit a reconsideration of the events of October 1, 1965 in Jakarta. They reveal an official security operation by the palace guard and a political operation by Aidit that goes against the CC PKI Politburos decision to not support Untung. The minutes also show Soehartos take-over of Untungs original action against the army leadership, by turning it into a full scale attack on them. All of this information could have been made public before, if Western researchers had not indiscriminately bought into Soehartos scathing dismissal of the minutes as lies and nonsense.

This last observation demands further research into the ignorance history of existing literature about the G30S. In my experience of working on this case for over 30 years, the communists have always displayed disdain and dislike for these trial minutes, and apparently Western researchers have incorporated this view in their work. I hope there will finally be an Indonesian investigation of the minutes. They were published at the time because the editor felt they should be read by the Indonesian people. It is about time that finally happens.

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**Professional      Blindness      And**

# Missing The Mark ~ Sexual Slander And The 1965/66 Mass Killings In Indonesia: Political And Methodological Considerations



ABSTRACT. Indonesia has been haunted by the “spectre of communism” since the putsch by military officers on 1 October 1965. That event saw the country’s top brass murdered and the military attributing this putsch to the Communist Party. The genocide that followed was triggered by a campaign of sexual slander. This led to the real coup and the replacement of President Sukarno by General Suharto. Today, accusations about communism continue to play a major role in public life and state control remains shored up by control over women’s bodies.

This article introduces the putsch and the socialist women’s organisation *Gerwani*, members of which were, at the time, accused of sexual debauchery. The focus is on the question of how *Gerwani* was portrayed in the aftermath of the putsch and how this affects the contemporary women’s movement.

It is found that women’s political agency has been restricted, being associated with sexual debauchery and social turmoil. State women’s organisations were set up and women’s organisations forced to help build a “stable” society, based on women’s subordination. The more independent women’s groups were afraid to be labelled “*new Gerwani*” as that would unleash strong state repression. This article assesses the implications of these events for the post-1998 period of Reformasi and reviews some recent analyses of 1965, state terrorism and violence and reveals blind spots in dealing with gender and sexual politics. It is argued that the slander against *Gerwani* is downplayed in these analyses. In fact, this slander was the spark without which the bloodbath would not have happened and would not have acquired its gruesome significance.

KEY WORDS: Sexual politics, communism, nationalism, Indonesia, women's movement, gender

In March 2009 campaigning for the parliamentary elections was in full swing. Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, a popular member of parliament and candidate for the Muslim party *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (PKB or National Awakening Party), in addition to being a well-known human rights lawyer and feminist activist, was campaigning in the district of Banyuwangi, in East Java, unfamiliar territory for her.**[1]** Her adversaries mounted a gossip campaign, spreading the rumour that she defended the illegal Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI). The association this allegation was supposed to evoke was that she was an atheist, opposing the clerical elite of the region, fighting for women's interests and, in general, looking for trouble.

These are serious issues, considering that the PKB is an offshoot of the Nahdlatul Ulema (NU), one of the two largest Muslim organisations in the country. Banyuwangi is considered one of NU's strongholds, with many Muslim boarding schools (*pesantren*) scattered across its vast area. The *kyai*, leaders of these *pesantren*, are the backbone of the NU. This was not the first time Nursyahbani Katjasungkana had been associated with the PKI or with one of its mass organisations. In December 1998, six months after the fall of General Suharto, the first national feminist conference since 1965 was held, in Yogyakarta. NKS, as she is popularly known, chaired the conference at which the Indonesian Women's Congress (Kongres Perempuan Indonesia or KPI) was established. This was the first feminist mass organisation since the destruction of Gerwani. At the time, NKS was accused of being "Gerwani baru" or a new Gerwani member. That term was reiterated by the then Minister of Women's Affairs, Tuti Alifiah in a Cabinet meeting in 1999, where she discussed her worries about the establishment of the KPI (NKS, personal communication, April 2009).

Only a few months earlier, when General Suharto was still in power, such an accusation could land one in serious trouble. But even in December 1999, with reformasi proclaimed, mention of Gerwani caused considerable unrest. At the congress, Ibu Sulami, a former secretary of the national leadership of Gerwani, spoke about Gerwani, its history and destruction. This was the first time Ibu Sulami had addressed a public meeting, having been imprisoned for 17 years.**[2]** Many participants were shocked by what she said, having believed the absurd lies the Suharto regime had spread about Gerwani's alleged involvement in the



murder of the generals who were killed in the early morning of 1 October 1965.**[3]** Because of the presence of Ibu Sulami, the delegates of Aisyah , the women's organisation of the Muhammadiyah, the other large Indonesian Muslim mass organisation, withdrew in protest.

Few events have impacted Indonesian modern history more deeply than the mass murders of 1965/66 which eventually led to the establishment of the New Order under President Suharto. Yet what triggered these mass murders has mostly been hidden under deep layers of fear, guilt, horror and shame. Clearly the trauma of the "events of 1965," as they are commonly referred to, is still playing an important role in the national imagination. Other than in countries like South Africa, Chile, Cambodia, Argentina and Rwanda, where processes of truth finding have led to some reconciliation, in Indonesia there still has not been a national process aimed at finding truth.**[4]**

Many issues remain unclear, such as the role Suharto himself played and the extent of the genocide unleashed by the military assisted by religious and, in some cases, conservative nationalist forces. At the local level, some careful efforts at reconciliation are being made by the members of Syarikat Islam (Muslim Association), set up in Yogyakarta in 2003. This process means that young people are being confronted with the mysterious pasts of their parents which have created insurmountable rifts between the families of the killers and of their victims. At the very emotional meeting when Syarikat Islam was launched, members of Ansor , the youth movement of the NU, confessed to having butchered PKI members in 1965. In tears they declared they thought they had been doing the right thing at the time, "cleansing" society from the perceived communist evil. In any case, they said, they had had little choice as they had acted under threat of the military. **[5]**

The hatred and fear of Gerwani are still so strong that the shooting of *Lastri*, a film based on a series of interviews with ex-Gerwani members, but with a more romantic fictional story line, was prohibited (Nadia, 2007). Early in 2009, after protests by members of the Surakarta branch of the Front Pembela Islam (FPI or Muslim Defender's Front) a right-wing Muslim militia group, the mayor of that city forbade Eros Djarot, the director, to shoot the film on location. The arguments used by the FPI were that the film would violate the rights of the Muslim community. The film was seen to be part of a propaganda strategy to create sympathy for communism. A press statement published by the FPI declared

further that this was a similar propaganda strategy as the Jews used to enhance sympathy for Israel by stressing the suffering of the many Holocaust victims. The FPI noted that films have a great potential to sway the minds of people, particularly when they contain a love story.

FPI strongly opposed the views of the director that the present beliefs of what happened at Lubang Buaya, the field where the army officers were killed, were just a fairy tale.**[6]** As will be explained, Gerwani members present when the generals were murdered were falsely accused of sexually torturing them. The film tried to debunk these fabrications. The inhabitants of Karanganyar, where the shooting of the film was to take place, joined the protests and demanded that permission for the filming be withdrawn.**[7]** Later, students of the Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam Bogor (HMI Bogor or Muslim Students Union) expressed their solidarity with the protesters.

Using a phrase from the New Order, they feared, so they declared, that the film would stir up the "latent danger" of the PKI (Jurnal Bogor , 19 December 2008). Reformasi is apparently not such a clean break as many had hoped at the time. Old wounds were not suddenly healed; democracy and truth did not emerge out of the toxic moral morass of the New Order. Old ghosts continue to haunt Indonesian society. The association of communism with atheism, the destruction of the family, women's declining sexual morals and a loss of social harmony persists to this very day. Communism is still prohibited. An attempt to legitimise communist thought failed in the Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat (MPR or People's Consultative Assembly) in August 2003. When NU chairman Abdulrahman Wahid (popularly known as Gus Dur) became president, he suggested that the ban on communism be lifted and that the former members of the party be allowed to vote, a right that had been denied them since 1965. Immediately, on 8 April 2000, a mass demonstration organised by the Front Umat Islam Indonesia (FUII or Front of the Indonesian Muslim Community) marched to the presidential palace, burning the PKI flag. One of their banners read: "We are confused! We love Gus (Dur) but we hate communism and Zionism" (Jakarta Post , 8 April 2000).

In Medan and Jambi similar demonstrations were held. In Jambi three demands were formulated: continue the ban on communism, no restoration of diplomatic ties with Israel and an end to prostitution (Kompas , 8 April 2000). It was no surprise that when the proposal to lift the ban came to the vote in the MPR, it was defeated. Only the PDI-P (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan or Indonesian

Democratic Party-Struggle), the party led by Sukarno's daughter Megawati Sukarnoputri, declared it was unjust that people associated with the PKI still could not vote (Kompas, 2 August 2003). When the issue of the voting rights of people associated with the PKI again was discussed in the MPR in 2004, strong opposition was voiced by an uncle of Abdurrahman Wahid, kyai Yusuf Hasyim, the leader of a big pesantren in Jombang. He said he was supported by many kyai, as they had experienced the "terror and intimidation and even the violence [of the PKI] towards the pesantren" (Tempo Interaktif 4 March 2004).

Opposition to anybody or anything associated with the PKI, and with Gerwani in particular, is less strident than during the Old Order, when anything associated with liberalism, activism and human and women's rights was considered "communist depravity." But, as Heryanto (2006: 9) rightly maintains, present-day Indonesian society cannot be understood without reference to the impact of the events of 1965 as these events continue to have a hold on people's minds and in society at large.

Suharto and his allies were able to maintain their grip on the country and terrorised many for so long by constantly reviving the spectre of communism and this has deeply influenced the texture of Indonesian society. Within this system of domination, the defamation of women's sexuality, based on the association of progressive women with unspeakable acts of debauchery, has played a large role in triggering the genocide of 1965/66. It stands to reason, then, that scholarship would pay attention to these issues and to gender issues more broadly.

While there were many mass organisations associated with the PKI, its women's organisation was the object of most hatred. Former members of the Peasant Unions, for instance, who had carried contentious actions for land reform about which the kyai were incensed, were not similarly reviled. Nor were the members of the party's Youth Wing - some of whom had contributed limited support to the plotters - the subject of such hatred and vilification. All through the New Order the word Gerwani was associated with allegedly unspeakable sexual perversions. People lowered their voices when referring to the "evil mothers of Gerwani."

The police treated women activists harshly and often sexualised their violence against them.<sup>8</sup> It took enormous courage for women to set up the first feminist organisations in the 1980s, such as Yasanti in Yogyakarta in 1982, Kalyanamitra in Jakarta (1984) and, in the early 1990s, groups such as Solidaritas Perempuan and Asosiasi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan (APIK or Indonesian Women's

Association for Justice), as women's political activism was still associated with moral depravity.[9]

Schoolbooks still echo the army version of history that has the army saving the nation from the treacherous communists (McGregor, 2005; McGregor, 2007). In 2007 new schoolbooks were produced in which this army version was contested. However, this effort met with strong protests from political forces associated with the previous regime and the new books were collected and burnt. The order for this was given by the country's then Attorney General, Abdul Rahman Saleh; it was widely rumoured that President General Yudhoyono might be involved in this action, as his father-in-law, Colonel Sarwo Edhie, was the main executioner of the genocide.<sup>10</sup>

After the 1 October 1965 putsch the government went all out to associate any kind of resistance to the army with communism, feminism, sexual depravity and violence, even producing a film, which was compulsory viewing for school children on many occasions, such as Independence Day, and a novel on the topic (Heryanto, 2006: 7-9).

### *The Sexual Politics of 1965/66*

What triggered this putsch which ultimately led to the complete transformation of Indonesian society? In short: on the night of 1 October 1965 three officers, supported by a few troops in Jakarta, wiped out the country's top brass, apart from General Suharto and General Nasution, who was wounded. The perpetrators were selfproclaimed leftist officers who said they acted to protect President Sukarno. They apparently wanted to abduct the right-wing generals and counted on the support of President Sukarno. However, they botched the operation; the abducted generals were killed and their bodies hidden in a well (see Roosa, 2006). They were supported by a few top members of the Communist Party which, as a whole, was not informed.

Some members of the youth movement of the Communist Party were employed to guard strategic buildings around Freedom Square in Jakarta. Women were not involved and were never indicted in the trials that followed (Wieringa, 1995; Wieringa, 2002). The putsch collapsed within one day, and General Suharto, who surprisingly was not captured, gained control over the army. Afterwards a campaign of sexual slander was launched with the help of army newspapers (the only newspapers still permitted) and the national radio. This slander claimed members of the communist women's organisation, Gerwani, were accused of

having killed and castrated the generals. A genocide followed, the dimensions of which have never been fully uncovered. Probably over a million people were massacred.[11]

Thereafter the power of the then President Sukarno was so weakened that in March 1966 he was forced to hand over power to the general behind the mass murders, Suharto. In 1967, Suharto was formally installed as president. Thus, the putsch was not a real coup, it was only the prelude to the slow but exceedingly bloody campaign that destabilised and ultimately unseated Sukarno (Roosa, 2006; Wieringa, 1995).

It is important to understand the background to the putsch. By mid-1965, tensions in Indonesian society were reaching a climax. In the countryside the actions of the Barisan Tani Indonesia (BTI or the Indonesian Peasants' Front), which demanded the rapid implementation of the recently introduced land reform laws, had thoroughly disturbed social relations. Particularly the kyai of large pesantren were inflamed, as they had extensive landholdings and had been the objects of many of the "unilateral actions" of the BTI. Rising levels of inflation caused increased poverty, particularly in urban areas. The relationship between the army leaders and conservative religious, mainly Muslim, groups on the one hand and the PKI on the other, became increasingly tense, with President Sukarno leaning more than ever towards the PKI side. Only he seemed able to keep the competing factions together.

The PKI was particularly worried that Sukarno might not be able to continue to protect them in view of the six assassination attempts which had been made on him (May, 1978). The PKI had been flexing its muscles in staging large mass demonstrations (Roosa, 2006). Meanwhile, right-wing forces, led by the army, had been quietly building a mass base, which its main organiser, Brigade General Djuhartono, claimed was larger than that of the "PKI family."<sup>12</sup> Declassified CIA documents analysed by Simpson provide further insight into how the right-wing military prepared itself for a showdown with the PKI (cited in Roosa, 2006).

In this tense situation several middle-ranking officers of the army, led by Colonel Untung, staged a military putsch. They wanted, so they testified later, to protect the President against plans of an alleged Council of Generals, which, so they had come to believe, intended to overthrow Sukarno on Army Day falling on 5 October (Latief, 2000). Also, they were discontented with the corrupt and decadent lifestyle of some of those generals, in particular Yani (Crouch, 1978: 38-42). Their

plans were vaguely discussed in several meetings of the PKI politburo, during which some limited, but only political, support was promised to the plotters (Mortimer, 1974: 392-4). Roosa (2006) has convincingly argued that party leader Aidit was the only one in the official party organisation who was in contact with the Special Bureau, headed by Sjam, who was tasked with contacting officers supportive of the PKI.

Aidit never fully informed the other members of the politburo. Even so, Aidit had mentioned that he was about to organise a “shortcut” to PKI ideals (Wieringa, 1995; Wieringa, 2002). Roosa (2006) recently speculated on the adventurism of Aidit which made him fall with open eyes into the trap set by the generals who had been waiting for just such a move of the PKI in order to attack the party. Miscommunication between Sjam and Aidit, on the one hand, and the officers, on the other, may account for the extraordinary clumsiness with which the putsch was executed.

In the early morning of 1 October 1965, six generals and one lieutenant (who was picked up instead of the main target of the plotters, General Nasution) were killed and their bodies were thrown into a deep well known as Lubang Buaya (Crocodile Hole), at a training field for volunteers of the Malaysia Konfrontasi campaign, which had been mostly used by volunteers of the PKI-affiliated youth organisation and the women’s organisation Gerwani . The field belonged to the air force.

Before the day was out General Suharto’s forces had managed to cajole and threaten half of the rebel forces into submission (Crouch, 1978: Chapter 4). In the meantime, President Sukarno had decided not to appoint General Suharto, who was next in line to replace the murdered Chief of Staff, General Yani, possibly because he considered him too strong-willed (Anderson and McVey, 1971). Instead he appointed the more junior General Pranoto Reksosamudro. Infuriated, Suharto ignored the orders of his President. He issued his own radio announcement that he had taken over the army leadership to restore security and order (Crouch, 1978: 132). Two weeks later Sukarno was compelled to replace Pranoto with Suharto. The propaganda campaign, the massacre and mass detainment followed.

How to interpret these events?

The army immediately declared that the PKI was the dalang (puppeteer) behind the coup , through its Special Bureau, headed by Sjam. The fullest account of the army view is given by Notosutanto and Saleh (1968). The PKI, on the other hand,

maintained initially that it was purely an intra-military affair. This version was supported abroad by a paper circulated since 1966 authored by Anderson and McVey (1971), two social scientists from Cornell University.

A third interpretation is that Suharto and possibly the CIA were behind a conspiracy to break the power of the PKI. Holzappel (1979), Scott (1985) and Wertheim (1979; 1991) have elaborated this view. This interpretation stresses the class aspects of both the coup and the propaganda campaign which followed it, pointing out that most victims fell in the areas where peasant unrest had been heaviest. Crouch (1978: Chapter 4) suggested the PKI played a role in what was basically an intra-army affair but gave little support for his view.

Recent research by Roosa (2006), based on an analysis of court documents, recently declassified CIA papers and some interviews, fills in many of the details that earlier researchers missed. His conclusion is that Aidit and Sjam were fully involved; Sjam carried the major responsibility as he was directly in contact with the military officers Untung, Latief and Supardjo. Between all of them, mainly through lack of communication and clumsy planning, the whole project was bungled. The army, which had long waited for an opportunity to attack the PKI and had prepared for that with the help of the CIA, grabbed its chance and began destroying the PKI (Roosa, 2006).

However, this interpretation still has major gaps. One is the role of General Suharto. It is not clear why Suharto was not captured with the other senior soldiers. If the plotters believed he would condone their action, as Latief (2000) suggested in his memoirs, they were thoroughly mistaken. Second, how was it that General Nasution and General Pranoto were sidestepped by Suharto? Third, if, as Roosa (2006: 22 and 178) suggests, the plans for an attack on the PKI had already been prepared beforehand, why was it three weeks before the killing started? Fourth, Roosa (2006: 29 and 198-200) refers to the psychological warfare the army staged, and mentions that the stories of castrations were a lie. He ignores the fact that it was sexual slander that was used in the campaign and that it was associated with women. The peasant and the youth movement were more directly involved as political actors prior to the putsch, but they were not slandered. What is the power of sexual politics in Indonesia that made these lies so effective? And who concocted them?

In my earlier analysis of the post-independence women's movement in Indonesia (Wieringa, 1995), I focused on Gerwani, the campaign they were subjected to and

the role Suharto might have played. On the basis of interviews, I mostly agreed with Crouch's analysis that the putsch was an intra-military affair with support from some members of the PKI politburo (Crouch, 1979). I focused on Suharto's critical role not so much in the putsch itself, of which he was probably merely informed, but particularly in the subsequent "real" coup, the taking over of power from the nation's leader, President Sukarno. Suharto has shown himself to be a ruthless and very ambitious man and a person able to wait patiently for the right moment to strike. The information he had received from his friend Latief (and possibly through his own intelligence) may have convinced him that the coup was so clumsily planned, with so little actual support that it would be too risky to support it, while it could very easily be put down (see Latief, 2000). He would then come out as the great saviour of the nation and Sukarno would have had no other choice than to appoint him Chief of Staff instead of the abducted Yani.<sup>13</sup> The start of the propaganda campaign which formed this second, "real" coup, the contours of which may have long been sketched by the army, as Roosa (2006) suggests, may have been when Sukarno appointed another officer to temporary Army Chief instead, which humiliated and enraged Suharto and made him realise that his only access to power lay in the removal of Sukarno. And that, in order to replace the President, his most powerful support group at the time, the communists, had to be destroyed (see Wieringa, 1995; Wieringa, 2002). Why else would Suharto defy the President's orders to obey Pranoto? If, as Roosa (2006) suggests, the struggle was only between communist and anti-communist forces, Pranoto could have done the job of destroying the PKI as well as any other general, as could General Nasution who was wounded but escaped being abducted. Suharto thus had to come up with a plan. The situation was extremely tense and he devised a plan which I maintain served as the spark for the powder keg, the volatile economic and political condition of the time. He thus created a situation of cosmic disorder, which in the Javanese mind, could be set straight only by ritual cleansing, which the army efficiently engineered.

#### *Demonising Communist Women: The "Real" Coup and Suharto's Rise*

Based on research conducted in the early 1980s, my reconstruction of what actually happened at Lubang Buaya is the following. On the day of the event, some 70 women, most of them young girls from the communist youth organisation, others from the trade union and the farmers' front, and a few Gerwani members, including some wives of soldiers, were assembled at Lubang Buaya for the anti-Malaysia Campaign. At the last moment a few Gerwani cadres



and some non-Gerwani wives of the Cakrabirawa palace guards, soldiers absolutely loyal to Sukarno, had been called up to join the women and girls. A few of them were given the task of sewing stripes on uniforms, presumably for members of the youth wing who had been assigned roles to support the alleged left-wing conspirators. But they had no idea why they had to sew new stripes on uniforms. This activity should have been carried out much earlier, for the youths should have received their shirts before coming into action.

This late allocation of tasks fits with Roosa's (2006) analysis of the poor planning of the whole adventure. The plotters could make use of Lubang Buaya as it was under the control of the air force, which was antagonistic to the conservative army staff and brought their victims there. Gerwani as an organisation was left out of the plans.**[14]**

What happened then? Where did the wild accusations come from that were later hurled at them of "naked, sexual dancing," of having "severed the penises of the generals" and of the generals having their "eyes gouged out?" How did the generals die (Anderson, 1987)?

From interviews conducted with surviving leaders of Gerwani and with women who were present at Lubang Buaya, the following account is the most likely.<sup>15</sup> In the early morning of 1 October, the girls and women were woken up by shouts. It was still dark outside and they were all frightened. They ran to the open space where they saw a group of soldiers dragging the kidnapped generals, some of whom had already been killed. The soldiers hit the generals and finally the ones still alive were shot and all bodies were thrown into a well. The soldiers were enraged - they even rained bullets on their victims when they were already dead. Terrorised, the girls and women ran back to Jakarta, most to their homes, others to the headquarters of Gerwani, where Ibu Sujinah and Ibu Sulami, who were secretaries of the organisation as single women, usually slept. Their slumber was disturbed by the banging on their office doors. That was the first time any of the Gerwani leadership heard anything about generals being abducted and some putsch taking place, as none of them were present at Lubang Buaya in that fateful night.

The training at Lubang Buaya was meant to be routine. Nobody interviewed found anything strange in the fact that a few extra volunteers were called up to perform tasks for the youth organisation. The whole "PKI family" at that time was used to being mobilised for mass actions or other activities.

Afterwards, the army media began circulating stories about dancing, alleged sexual perversions and the cutting off of penises. In fact, the army went to great lengths to construct the stories they decided to circulate. Witnesses were quoted in the only newspapers allowed to appear, and photographs were shown. There were television broadcasts and radio programmes on the “horrors” said to have been committed at Lubang Buaya. How did the military go about that?

The girls and women at Lubang Buaya were arrested and released several times during the first weeks of October, although nobody seemed to be able to come up with any accusations. This puts into doubt the careful planning the army and the CIA had been doing in their hope the PKI would be so stupid as to do exactly what Aidit and Sjam had cooked up with the few officers who carried out the military part in the night of 1 October, as Roosa (2006) asserts. Ultimately, in an as yet unidentified process, the idea of accusing the girls and women of sexual mutilation was conceived, the young women who were captured were horribly tortured, sexually molested, gang raped and then forced to say “yes” to anything their torturers wanted them to testify.<sup>16</sup> A volunteer girl present at Lubang Buaya told me that she was forced to undress in prison and to dance naked in front of her torturers while they took pictures (see Wieringa, 1995; Wieringa, 2002). These shots were later used to “prove” the girls had been dancing naked some weeks earlier.<sup>17</sup>

The campaign of slander against the women had a slow start. While the autopsy results had become available to the authorities, they were not made public. The autopsy demonstrated that the wounds found on the bodies of the dead generals and lieutenant were either gunshots, or resulted from heavy, dull traumas, possibly caused by clubbing with the butts of guns or the damage likely to occur from a fall into a deep well. The genitals of the generals were intact, all eyes were in place, and there were no traces of cuts with razors. As General Suharto himself had ordered the report to be prepared and had signed it, with President Sukarno, it is unlikely that he had not been informed of its results before the burial of the dead (Anderson, 1987).

A first indication that some gruesome plan was being hatched was a story in the *Berita Yuddha* of 11 October 1965. It reported on the condition of the bodies of the generals from the well. Contrary to what the autopsy revealed, the newspaper wrote that “eyes had been gouged out, and of some generals had had their genitals cut off.”

This story was the beginning of one of the most effective mass campaigns intended to spread terror since the Second World War. Other army-derived reports tell of women dancing naked and of young women committing sexual acts with the generals (see Wieringa, 1995; Wieringa, 2003a). Spurred on by the army, the campaign got underway; the slogans of students and other groups who were demonstrating against the PKI and Sukarno included Gerwani Tjabul (Gerwani Whores), Gantung Gerwani (Hang Gerwani ) and Ganjang Gerwani (Crush Gerwani ). Islamic leaders soon joined the chorus. Muhammadiyah declared that the “extermination of the Gestapu/PKI and the Nekolim (neo-colonialist forces) is an obligatory religious duty” (Boland, 1982: 146). This call for a “holy war” was subsequently echoed by many Muslim leaders, who justified the killings of the communists as “the will of Allah” (see Cribb, 1990; Schwarz, 1994). An agreement was drawn up between NU leaders and the army that the youth movement, Ansor, and its armed wing, Banser, would support the army in its extermination of leftists.

The late mother of former President Wahid, Solichah A. Wahid Hasyim, was particularly active in this respect. The agreement was signed by her, and concluded at her house (interview, Khairul (pseud.), NU activist, April 2007).<sup>18</sup> The NU had long prepared for this role. Recently, it has become known that Yusuf Hasyim, a younger brother of Gus Dur, had been studying Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* in order to find out how youth groups could be organised most effectively.<sup>19</sup> The NU women’s wing, Muslimat, joined the aggression against anything related to Gerwani . In Jakarta, for instance, Aisyah Baidhuri, a sister of Gus Dur and a member of parliament, joined in the destruction of the Melati kindergartens which had been set up by Gerwani (Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, personal communication).<sup>20</sup>

More lurid reports followed, implicating Gerwani members as having prostituted themselves routinely for PKI leaders on the instigation of PKI chairman Aidit.<sup>21</sup> It is striking that, following their “confessions,” none of the women who had been present at Lubang Buaya and who had been detained was ever brought to court.<sup>22</sup> In December, the campaign lost its vigour. Most of the killing in Java had been done, although in Bali the worst killing took place in the second half of December 1965 (Robinson, 1995; Robinson, 1996). And many were to perish in overcrowded prisons where they were detained under inhumane conditions.

### *Creation of Disorder*

What kind of an organisation was Gerwani ? In the national revolution (1945-49) women's political participation was welcomed. Sukarno called the women's movement the "second wheel" on the chariot of the national revolution (Sukarno, 1963). Thereafter, though, they were expected to return to the "kitchen, bed, and well," (dapur , kasur , sumur , the three spaces where women were supposed to excel, according to traditional gender ideology). Gerwani , however, insisted that women still had another revolution to fight: freedom from subordination as women and for their right to act in the political arena. As members of the "left family," for instance, they assisted farmers, male and female, imprisoned for their involvement in the farmers' movement and women workers. In large demonstrations they protested the deplorable economic situation. They campaigned tirelessly against violence against women. They called themselves "progressive" women. The organisation was never formally associated with the PKI but, when they were forced in early 1965 to align themselves with one or another party, they had decided to formally join the "PKI family." That decision was to be ratified at their December 1965 congress, which due to the political upheaval, never took place (Wieringa, 2002). Gerwani 's political and social activities earned them the reputation of trouble-makers with the more traditional women's organisations, and with conservative groups in general, particularly the Muslim establishment.

The significance of the campaign of sexual slander against Gerwani lies in the deliberate manipulation of the collective cultural and religious conscience of the Indonesian population. This manipulation involved the deliberate creation of the disorder on which Suharto built his road to power. Suharto (1966) wrote explicitly that "a mental transition" had been required in a pamphlet that appeared a year after the putsch . Because of Sukarno's great popularity and the large following of the PKI, which strongly supported President Sukarno, it was not an easy task to eliminate the PKI. Yet it was necessary, Suharto felt, to destroy the party as that would be the only way to discredit the President. Another reason to go slowly and to first prepare the required "mental transition" is put forward by Suharto (1991) in his autobiography. He explains that a military coup would have been much faster, but that such drastic action might have entailed the danger of a counter-coup. It seems that a climate of disorder was deliberately created to exploit the deep anxieties of a population, which was already badly shaken by political and socio-economic tensions. This disorder struck chords with the people's fear of the uncontrolled sexual powers of women, a religiously inspired apprehension that

women's disobedience would endanger the entire social system, Hindu notions of all-female maniacal crowds and a male horror of castration (Mernissi, 1985; Tiwon, 1996).

Islamic youth groups, mainly NU's Banser and Ansor, assisted the army and especially the troops of Colonel Edhie in Java. Edhie, later to become the father-in-law of President Yudhoyono, was in charge of the elimination of the PKI and its mass organisations (Crouch, 1978; Robinson, 1995). In other places, especially in Bali, members of the conservative wing of the PNI were involved as well. Hindu Balinese saw the killing of people associated with the PKI "as the fulfilment of a religious obligation to purify the land" (Robinson, 1995: 300). Robinson argues that the killings in Bali were spurred by a campaign mounted by the local military and police authorities. In the building of German fascism, too, the exploitation of (male) sexual fears played an important role (see Theweleit, 1987). In general, control over women's bodies and sexuality is an important tool for nation building (Mosse, 1985; Wieringa, 2003a; Yuval-Davis, 1997).

### *Sexual Politics and Suharto's New Order*

In March 1966, General Suharto knew the time was ripe for him to wrest power from President Sukarno.<sup>23</sup> For the next 30 years the New Order state waged a campaign of sexual imagining - posing the government against "communist whores" - a crusade aimed at presenting the army under Suharto as the virile saviours of a nation on the brink of destruction. Long after the PKI had been destroyed in one of the bloodiest transitions to power in modern times, the spectre of communism, especially as animated by its women, was still called upon to justify the harsh repression of any democratic anti-government forces. As Enloe (1990: 45) wrote, "nationalism has typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope." Masculine memories, hopes and humiliations often centre around women's sexuality. Their "own" women's chastity has to be defined and protected, while the "other" women are either constructed as objects of rape or they are disciplined in other ways. This had wide ramifications in society, the association of evil with its dark sexual undercurrent also extended to many cultural sectors. In Java, many performers of traditional art forms were also affected. This was because the "PKI family" had its own cultural association, LEKRA, members of which supported the PKI's ideological struggles. As a PKI-associated organisation LEKRA and its members would anyhow be persecuted in the general massacre.

However, as Agung Putri, director of ELSAM (Lembaga Studi dan Advokasi Masyarakat or Foundation for the study and advocacy of society), asserted during a seminar at the office of the National Human Rights Commission. (15 April 2010), citing the analysis of Dr Rachmi Larasati, LEKRA was specifically targeted, and the sexual savagery which was created around Gerwani helped in this campaign against them.<sup>24</sup>

Sexual politics thus underlay the construction of the New Order regime. Sexual politics deal with the moral, sexual, symbolic, cultural and political codes in which individuals, families and the nation are linked, and with the interplay between sexed and gendered bodies and the socio-political realm. In Indonesia the putsch of 1 October 1965 unleashed a bitter struggle in which the military version of family life and state power prevailed over that of another patriarchal force, the Communist Party. In the process the communist “revolutionary” family was wiped out and the military family form, built on an excessively masculine power obsessed with control and women’s submission, became the dominant one. Women were no longer defined as comrades in the revolutionary struggle, but as submissive wives and devoted mothers. Suharto became the super-patriarch, as Father of the Development Family he wanted his New Order state to be.

### *Clash of Masculinities*

In this clash of masculinities both sides had their own version of the ideal family. The PKI had built a hybrid construct called the “Manipol” family, composed of nationalist-Sukarnoist and socialist rhetoric. The word “Manipol” comes from Manifesto Politik, Sukarno’s 1959 Independence Day speech. Women in these Manipol families supported their men as revolutionary fighters for a bright socialist future, while struggling along in their own women’s organisation, Gerwani, which also claimed a role in the national political arena. The women combined political, socialist and nationalist activities with their duties in the household (Wieringa, 2002).

In Suharto’s Development state women were responsible for the strict obedience of the family as a whole to the patriarchal, authoritarian national ideology Suharto imposed on the nation (Blackburn, 2004a; Suryakusuma, 1996; Wieringa, 1985). For this project women’s sexuality had to be controlled and state-controlled women’s organisations had to be set up in order to ensure that women behaved with the required obedience. The legitimacy of the New Order state thus rested largely on the measure of control it exercised both over its “own” women, as well as over the “abject” communist women and the “enemy” men who were

portrayed as being responsible for the “perverse,” “inhuman,” “primitive” behaviour of “their” women. These abject women were so powerless that even after they had been released they could be used as sexual slaves (Nadia, 2007; Susanti, 2006).

Throughout Suharto’s rule the PKI was associated with these two words: *penghianat* (“traitor”) and *biadab* (“savage”). The PKI was thus excluded from the nation and even from humanity as such. The alleged “savagery” of the PKI rested in large part on the accusations of sexual debauchery of women associated with the party.

The regime tried to keep the fantasy it had created alive by building an enormous museum, called “Museum Penghianatan (Betrayal) PKI,” on the site where the generals were murdered. It contains huge murals of photographs, composed of pictures taken, amongst other places, at the well of Lubang Buaya. Strikingly, the pictures of the bodies of the generals, terrible as they are, show no signs of razor blade cuts, and there are no bloody patches on the places where the castrations should have taken place. All the crotches, as far as visible, are intact. The uniforms of the murdered generals, also on display in a room of the same building, show no damage where castrations would have taken place, while the blood from shot wounds in other parts of their bodies is visible (see Wieringa, 2002).

The monument on the same site is called “Monumen Pancasila Sakti (sacred) Lubang Buaya .” It is a huge semi-circular construction in front of a pillar and a statue of the Garuda, the national bird. Statues of the slain generals and lieutenant in a vigorous attitude, and in full military attire, are placed on a platform. Below them the history of Indonesia since 1945, according to Suharto, is presented in a mural. It is here that the full ideological weight of the way the New Order regime was built on the subordination of women and the manipulation of sexual symbols becomes clear (Wieringa, 2002; Wieringa, 2003a; McGregor, 2007). The central part of the mural is devoted to the events at Lubang Buaya (Figure 1). The generals are being clubbed and thrown into the well. They are surrounded by representations of women. To the left three women are standing. One of them is dressed in a sexual manner and argues defiantly with a man. The arguing couple is very ugly. Beside her two dancing women are arranged, one of whom has a wreath of flowers (representing the so-called “Dance of the Fragrant Flowers,” by means of which the unfortunate generals were allegedly seduced).

Above the well one woman is portrayed leaning against a tree. She is clad in uniform trousers and a blouse that clearly reveals her full breasts. A knife is stuck in her belt. Her posture again is defiant. More to the right the scene is dominated by the overpowering figure of General Suharto. Under his left arm two women are standing, heads down, attitude demure, one of them is carrying a baby. The figure of General Suharto has intervened and turned those defiant, seductive, dangerous and castrating women into the very symbols of obedience and motherhood. The last scene shows the all-powerful General and President Suharto in front of what is presumably a courtroom. Absolute military and legal power is his.

The central element of the ideological fury unleashed around women's involvement in the murders of Lubang Buaya is that Gerwani in its "communist," "perverted" madness had the major hand in torturing and killing the generals, dancing naked and cutting off their penises. The clash of masculinities that formed the core of the internecine struggle between a patriarchal army and a differently patriarchal communist party was played out over women's bodies. The male, militarised honour was constructed as being defamed by communist women and Gerwani's rebellious women were demonised. The control over women's sexuality thus became a matter of prime national concern.**[25]**

As the army was victorious, a militarised masculinity obsessed with control over abject forms of masculinity became the hegemonic ideological force in the New Order state. The femininity that went with that model entailed a return to a conservative kodrat wanita (women's code of conduct), referring to the well-known shadow play figure of the meek, obedient Sumbadra, in contrast to the wayang figure adopted by Gerwani, the warrior-princess Srikandi.**[26]** Those women who had been branded as "communist" or who had somehow been caught up in the cruel aftermath of the "events of 1965" were tainted as abject. Even today, 45 years after the putsch, it is meant as a deep insult to be branded "new Gerwani," as happened to Nusyahbani Katjasungkana.

### *Reformation or Restoration?*

Can we really speak of a period of "reformasi" (reformation), as the present political post-1998 elite claims? School books that question the army version of 1965 are burnt, the making of a film on Gerwani is sabotaged and book bannings are back, including the book by Roosa on the 1965 plot. The women survivors of the genocide against the left prefer to live together in old-age homes, as they do not want to embarrass their grandchildren by having a former Gerwani member living with them, as one of them, Ibu Lestari, explained in an interview (15 April



2010). The association of Gerwani with prostitution is still alive. As Agung Putri, who courageously attempted community reconciliation for many years, said, "their families don't dare to be honest about who their mothers were, and the mothers also are afraid to announce their identities" (Kompas, 23 April 2010). The launch of the Indonesian version of the author's 2002 book *Sexual Politics in Indonesia* on 15 April 2010 had to be announced with great circumspection (Wieringa, 2010). The launch was to be accompanied by a television programme, hosted by Kick Andy, on Metro TV, but that was cancelled two days prior to the event due to fears that the strongly anti-communist and anti-gay Muslim militia Front Pembela Islam (Muslim Defenders' Front) might become involved (communication from Stanley Ruhoro, commissioner, National Human Rights Commission). The preview of the film by MajWechselmann, entitled "The Women and the Generals," which took place at the same event, could not be publicly announced, as the organising committee also feared the Front Pembela Islam. As Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, a former member of parliament who spoke at the event, maintained, the "Indonesian state still allows the continuation of this physical, psychological and symbolic violence, and thus causes a silence in which the civil rights of millions of its citizens are still denied" (Kompas, 23 April 2010). With the police unwilling to defend human rights activists, and the rise to power of several prominent generals known to be involved in human right violations, I suggest that the 1998 reformation period has turned into a regime in which increasingly old powers are restoring their influence (see Robison and Hadiz, 2004). In this process of restoration, sexual politics again play an important role. Hard-line Islamic groups, such as the Front Pembela Islam and the conservative Majelis Ulama Islam (Muslim Clerics Council or MUI), but also many regional parties and groups, increasingly base their claims on legitimacy and their bids for political power on control over women's behaviour and dress codes, various forms of control over sexuality in general, and over women's sexuality, in particular (see Katjasungkana, forthcoming). Indonesian women's groups fight this growing influence, which they attribute to the growth of an alien, "Arabic" form of Islam (Wieringa, 2009). Particularly the proliferation of regional by-laws since the beginning of reformasi, the so-called perda (peraturan daerah lit regional by-laws, qanun in Aceh, the only part of the country in which Islamic law is allowed) contains several articles which control women's bodies and sexuality and violate the country's national laws (Noerdin et al., 2005). State officials and senior politicians seem unwilling to confront these violations of the constitution. The legal situation for women is worsening. The most recent examples are the review

of the request for a judicial review of the 2008 anti-pornography law in which women's bodies are targeted and the 2009 health law which contains various clauses that restrict women's control over their own bodies.[27]

### *Conclusion: Role of Scholars*

Do scholars of Indonesia pay sufficient attention to gender analysis in this political process? The above analysis bears on a number of topics that are hotly debated among scholars. In the first place on the never-yet-resolved riddle of who exactly triggered the actual coup of 1966, the transfer of power from President Sukarno to General Suharto. Roosa (2006) has done most of the detective work in unmasking the plotters. At the same time, he has hardly touched on Suharto's rise to power and the explicit use of sexual slander. He mentions "psychological warfare" a few times and dismisses the rumours of castration as nonsense, but he does not reflect on the question of why these rumours were created in the first place and what effects they had in Suharto's creeping coup. Why were women's bodies and sexuality singled out?

Secondly, a gender analysis is relevant to theories of the formation of the modern Indonesian nation and on nation building in general. If nation building in modern times, as Anderson (1983) maintains, is a project of the imagination, what kind of masculinist imagination has been at work here? Third, this gender analysis of violence is interesting for those who are working on the roots of violence, particularly in Indonesia. Fourth, scholars of the Indonesian women's movement and of gender relations in Indonesia, Asia and elsewhere will find certain elements they can use. It is striking that only this last group of scholars regularly refer to Gerwani's history and the ramifications of the sexualisation of persecution in 1965/6 (see Blackburn, 2004a). The other three groups of scholars have generally maintained silence.

One might hope that 30 years after the basic insights into the workings of gender relations became available (e.g. Rubin, 1975; Scott, 1989) scholars would have incorporated this body of work into their basic tool kit, as has happened with many other theories of social transformation and nation building that have been developed since the 1970s. However, this is not the case. Apart from Roosa's book, discussed throughout this article, I provide two other examples of studies which would have been immensely enriched had they dealt with gender relations and sexual politics.

In 2002, Colombijn and Lindblad published an anthology, entitled *Roots of Violence in Indonesia*. Of the twelve chapters none is devoted to Gerwani and the

1965/6 massacres, although several articles refer to the putsch and its aftermath to discuss other moments of violence. This is in itself surprising, as with about one million people murdered it ranks as one of the major bloodbaths in modern history and the largest one in Indonesian modern history. It is striking that an analysis of gender relations and the sexualisation of violence is missing, even where the putsch is discussed. How is it possible to analyse the “roots” of violence if this critical aspect is ignored? Gerwani itself is only referred to twice. Cribb (2002) mentions that Gerwani members were among the major victims of the violence unleashed by the Suharto group. He gives no sources and does not elaborate. He does note that the PKI is “demonized,” but he fails to mention the sting of this demonisation, its sexual overtones.

Elson (2002) goes a step further, writing of stories of “sadistic tortures and mutilations,” using the term “sexual depravity.” But he too neglects to refer to any sources that analyse this campaign, and he bases himself not on the most direct primary sources, the army press, but on the much-toned down articles in other periodicals and newspapers. Unable to understand the ramifications of this campaign of “sexual depravity,” he concludes that “it is difficult to decide” whether “Suharto really believed . . . that the PKI was ultimately responsible for Gestapu. . .” (Elson, 2002: 180). Why else would Suharto go to such lengths as to construct such gruesome tales and to fabricate “proof” of the alleged depravities of the girls by filming them naked in the prison, some weeks after the murders took place? In the next paragraph, he states that “Suharto must bear final responsibility for the massacres . . .” but this conclusion is based on a post-facto analysis of the ways the military and their allies went about the killings, not on who masterminded the stories of “sexual depravity” in the first place.

Elson seems reluctant to recognise that Suharto and his allies had deliberately construed the “sexual depravity” of which Gerwani was accused. He writes: “. . . Suharto and his followers made much capital out of the sadistic tortures and mutilations allegedly visited upon the dead or dying generals” (Elson, 2002: 180). The key word here is “allegedly.” Who orchestrated the belief in these so-called tortures, if not Suharto himself? Elson’s statement is more interesting as on the previous page he had described Suharto being present when the bodies of the murdered generals were uncovered. Thus, he must have seen very clearly at that moment that their crotches were still intact and that no eyes had been gouged out.

This is also borne out by the display of the uniforms of the murdered officers in

the museum erected at Lubang Buaya. All blood stains are still clearly visible. Yet no blood is found on the crotches.

Another example is a recently published study of state terrorism in Indonesia, by the well-known political scholar Ariel Heryanto (2006). Heryanto's book is an incisive analysis of the consequences of the 1965/6 mass killings in Indonesia. He gives many examples of how only by understanding how the spectre of communism is manipulated one is able to analyse the social and political dynamics in Indonesia. He supports the thesis that the mass killings of 1965/6 laid the groundwork for the military, authoritarian rule of General Suharto. Fully aware of the power of ideology, he examines two key texts in the continued production of terror in Indonesia, a novel and a film produced in the 1980s. Their title is the same, "The Treason of the 30 September Movement/the Indonesian Communist Party." They are based on the army version of the putsch and the violence that followed it and demonised the PKI, legitimising the rule of the army as the saviour of the nation.

Millions of students and other citizens were obliged to watch the film. Both film and book thus played a similar role as newspapers and the radio played in 1965/6.**[28]**

Though Heryanto (2006: 15) mentions that the film deliberately uses the "horrific violence in the killings of the seven officers" to demonise the PKI and to portray the murdered officers as ideal fathers and husbands, the author fails to note the sexual overtones of the violence presented in the film. In his definition of state terrorism, and in his further analysis of the impact of state terrorism, a gender analysis is conspicuously absent. Although Heryanto (2006: 3) concedes that this mass terror has been "a crucial force in the formation of the subject identities, fantasies and everyday activities of this nation for decades," he does not dwell on the implications of the creation of the myth of sexual depravity.

This failure has two major consequences. First Heryanto is unable to explain why the women's movement, haunted by fear of being called "new Gerwani" was so weakened under the New Order. Women's political agency became suspect, an issue that would be strengthened in later years by the rising tide of Muslim fundamentalism. Second, by ignoring the sexual overtones in the perpetuation of the "spectre of communism," Heryanto cannot explain convincingly the continued power of this "spectre" in the national imagination.

What are the consequences of this neglect of a gender analysis? The most obvious

are:

- (i) the neglect of one of the most pervasive relations of inequality in Indonesian society;
- (ii) an inability to understand major social phenomena which are greatly influenced by gender relations, such as nation building, violence, social movements, regionalisation, globalisation;
- (iii) contributing to the continuation of the genderblindness of the social sciences;<sup>29</sup> and
- (iv) an inability to contribute to the emancipation of all sectors of Indonesian society.

Gender studies within Indonesian studies is still seen as something about women and by women, as if studies on rural relations could only be written by peasants about peasants. Hence, while it is expected that scholars of women's studies are well versed in the literature produced by their "male-stream" colleagues, "male-stream" Indonesianists hardly cite the literature that they considered "women's literature."

Why the "male-stream" is seemingly unable to cite from the wider literature on gender remains unclear.

The same silence reigns regarding the beginning of the mass unrest that forced Suharto to step down in May 1989. All accounts dealing with this critical transition mention the student demonstrations and the May riots. In these events sexual politics - in this case the mass rapes of Chinese women - play a significant role.

Indeed, it is barely remembered that women marched first to protest against the effects the economic crisis of 1997/8 had on ordinary people (Forrester and May, 1998). On 23 February 1998, these women demanded affordable food and milk for their children. This was a strong attack on Suharto, for as the self-proclaimed "Father of the Nation," he could not be seen to be unable to provide for the nation's babies. After that, women's organisations, such as Suara Ibu Peduli (SIP, Voice of Concerned Mothers), were among the first to forge an anti-Suharto coalition, though they were later eclipsed by the students (SIP, 1999; Wieringa, 2002).

Gender relations and sexual politics can no longer be neglected by the scholars dealing with this deep trauma in Indonesian history. In the bulletin *Setelah Nonton Film Pembantaian* (After seeing the film on the massacres, 14 September

2000), Balinese poet Putu Oka declared: “the mental construction of the community has been destroyed” by the events of 1965/6. Sexual politics form the core of this process of moral decay. Therefore, only with a careful analysis of the sexual metaphors created by the army and used by them to spur on conservative organisations to kill many thousands of innocent people can a process of reconciliation begin.

## NOTES

1 Nursyahbani Katjasungkana was the first secretary-general of the Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (KPI or Indonesian Women’s Coalition) from 1998 until 2004 and is co-founder of the Association for Women’s Justice (APIK), which by 2010 had 15 local branches. In 2010 she was also the president of the Kartini Asia Network, an Asia-wide network of feminist activists and academics.

2 Ibu Sulami was one of four members of Gerwani and PKI-associated associations to have been tried following the 1965/66 events. These four were not convicted because of their alleged involvement with the murder of the generals, but for their involvement with a movement alleged to have supported the then deposed Sukarno. Copies of their testimonies before the court are held by the author.

3 The author spoke in the same session, having been permitted to return to Indonesia after being blacklisted since 1986. At the session the author presented autopsy results showing the lies about the castrations of the generals. Anderson (1987) was the first to draw attention to the document.

4 Recently the National Human Rights Commission has begun an investigation into the extent of the genocide. By mid-2011, no results have been made public.

5 This information was gleaned from several conversations with Syarikat Islam members in 2004 and 2006. Similar sentiments were voiced by a former leader of Banser, the military wing of Ansor and Heavily involved in the mass killings in Probolinggo (interview, April 2008).

6 The links to this are: <http://www.fpi.or.id/artikel.asp?oy.sik-24> (downloaded 18 May 2009; no longer available). See also <http://www.indonesiamatters.com/3059/lastri/>.

7 See <http://www.kabarindonesia.com> (downloaded 29 November 2008). See also <http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2008/11/19/0025295/unjuk.rasa.mendukung.film.lastri> [Demonstrate Support of the Film Lastri] of 19 November 2008. Director Djarot believes that the “spontaneous protesters” in the countryside were paid by the secret police to sabotage his film. They created such an uproar that the

political leaders prohibited shooting of the film (interview Djarot with Swedish film maker Maj Wechselmann, March 2009).

8 In discussions with the author, the activist Yenny Rosa revealed that when she was captured in Yogyakarta at the end of the 1980s for selling the books of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, she noticed she was treated with more viciousness than the male students who were picked up with her. The soldiers shouted at her that she was a dirty whore. Only after her release, when she had read about the campaign of sexual slander against Gerwani, did she understand where those accusations came from.

9 Yasanti was set up by Muslim feminists. Kalyanamitra was initially mainly a women's documentation centre. Solidaritas Perempuan focused on women migrant workers. APIK is a network by women's legal aid bureaux set up by Nursyahbani Katjasungkana.

10 The allegation is made by Asvi Warman Adam, from the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (see Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2007).

11 Amnesty International cites the one million figure. Cribb (1990) is more conservative; he concluded that it was most likely that around 500,000 people were massacred. Sarwo Edhie, who led the army units that orchestrated the killings, boasted of having reached a total of three million dead (cited in Wieringa, 2002).

12 See the author's interview with Djuhartono (Wieringa, 1995; Wieringa, 2002). The main portent of his information is used in a scene in my novel *Lubang Buaya*, where the murders of the generals took place (Wieringa, 2003b).

13 Roosa (2006) provides evidence that strongly suggests that this kind of abduction was a tactic often used in Indonesian history and which led to loss of face for those abducted; Suharto, who was Yani's temporary replacement, would thus probably replace him in full. When it turned out that Yani was murdered, Suharto must have been even more convinced that this was his chance for power.

14 All members of the national leadership interviewed emphatically denied that they had in any way been informed of an impending putsch. None of them has ever been formally accused, while they all spent many years in prison.

15 For the full interviews, see Wieringa (2002). For the atmosphere within the "PKI family," see the Sources cited in Wieringa (2002) and Roosa (2006), especially Hindley (1966), May (1978) and Mortimer (1974).

16 In my novel on *Lubang Buaya* I took the liberty to fictionalise the construction of this process. There is no proof of who else besides army intelligence was involved. I suspect, however, based on many discussions with survivors of the

massacre and people close to the NU and to the rabidly anticommunist Catholic clergy, that NU cleric Subchan and Catholic priest Father Beek may have inspired some of the thinking that went into the fabrications of the lies of sexual torture (see Wieringa, 2003b; Wieringa, 2007).

17 The Swedish filmmaker Maj Wechselmann recently took other interviews with survivors of the camps who told similar stories. Her film ‘‘The Women and the Generals’’ was recently released. See the film’s website, <http://thewomenandthegenerals.wordpress.com/2010/01/28/the-film-the-women-and-the-generals/>.

18 The author has not seen the actual text of this document. Mrs Solichah was a member of parliament from 1960 to 1982 and a leader of the NU women’s organisation, Muslimat NU (see Blackburn, 2004b).

19 This sensational revelation is contained in an interview with Yusuf Hasyim in which he explains what he learnt from Mein Kampf in ‘‘The Women and the Generals’’ by Maj Wechselmann, cited above.

20 Melati means jasmine. It was the symbol of Gerwani, and the kindergartens which the organisation set up were named after this flower.

21 One of the more spectacular accusations was that Aidit would have given an award to a Gerwani girl who would have sexually serviced most PKI cadres (Wieringa, 2002).

22 The author has copies of the court testimonies of the four women leaders who were tried. Ibu Sulami and Ibu Sujinah were members of Gerwani, the others belonging to the women’s wings of the progressive peasant and labour unions. They fled and were captured only when most of the killings were over. They were only ever charged with supporting the pro-Sukarno movement, which was underground as Suharto had banned it. They were all tortured horribly and spent many years in prison. They related the details of their torture in their interviews with the author.

23 President Sukarno was forced to hand over power to Suharto by signing the Supersemar (Surat Perintah Sebelas Maret, Letter of Instruction of 11 March). The association with Semar is critical. Semar is a wayang puppet signifying the trusted servant of the gods, and loyal to superhero Ardjuno.

24 This seminar was held on the occasion of the publication of the Indonesian translation of *Sexual Politics in Indonesia* (Wieringa, 2002).

25 It is interesting to compare the way Schreiner (2005), a male historian, deals with the Lubang Buaya monument compared with McGregor (2007). Schreiner totally misses the gender elements of the monument, while McGregor provides



the most lucid account of the monument I have read so far, incorporating a gender analysis.

26 Both puppets are wives of the popular shadow play hero Arjuna. Srikanthi is the incarnation of a male character, Amba.

27 Women's groups, such as Komnas Perempuan, APIK and the KPI, are fighting these issues, but they seem powerless to change this trend. In a speech which Nursyahbani Katjasungkana delivered at the opening of the V Film Festival in Jakarta on 21 April 2010, she dealt with the impact of these laws. She clearly linked this continuing (and growing) violation of women's rights to the fate of Gerwani.

28 The film was also shown on television every anniversary of the 30 September putsch.

29 In 1977 I published my first article on Indonesia, a critique of the androcentrism of one of the major texts on Indonesian history, Wertheim's 'Indonesian Society in Transition' (1956). At that time a critique on androcentrism was new. By now gender analysis has become a widely used theory and methodological tool.

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# Professional Blindness And Missing The Mark ~ The Anthropologist's Blind Spots: Clifford Geertz On Class, Killings And Communists In Indonesia



When I first went to Indonesia for research in 1972, I was not well prepared at all. The decision to go to Indonesia had been made at short notice. Soon after I discovered that I would not be allowed to go to Burma, I met Clifford Geertz after he had given a lively seminar at Columbia University and he suggested that I shift my interests to Indonesia. Like many graduate students of this era I had been impressed by Geertz's *Agricultural Involution* (1963a). Unlike PhD candidates from universities with strong traditions of teaching and research on Indonesia like Leiden, Wageningen, Amsterdam,

Cornell, Berkeley or Yale I had taken no courses in Indonesian studies, knew only a few words of Indonesian language, and had read only a very few books on Indonesia. Among them was a curious and disturbing booklet called *Indonesia*

*1965: The Second Greatest Crime of the Century* (Griswold 1970). This booklet gave stark details of the orchestrated anti-Communist backlash after the crushing of a bungled leftist coup attempt in Jakarta (in which twelve persons in total had been killed) and the massacre of hundreds of thousands of alleged communists and communist sympathizers in Java and Bali in late 1965 - early 1966. It also gave a quite different version of the background and course of the massacres than what was to be found in the US Government Printing Office's semi-official *Area Handbook for Indonesia*.

During my stay in Indonesia I found little to read, and few people willing to talk, about the killings or the events of 1965-66 more generally. In the village in Kulon Progo (Yogyakarta) where I lived during 1972-73 there had been no killings, although people were aware that there had been killings in other parts of the district. On two visits to Jakarta the confident young expatriate staff of the Ford Foundation - always a good source of gossip - seemed to hold to a version of the events of 1965-66 that was close to that of the *Area Handbook* and the Indonesian government.

When I returned to New York and had decided more or less to make myself into an Indonesia expert, I was of course curious to learn more. One of the first authors I turned to, not surprisingly, was Clifford Geertz. Besides numerous articles and chapters on Indonesian religion and rural society, Geertz had published five books on Indonesia during the years 1960-1968: *The Religion of Agricultural Involvement, Peddlers and Princes, The Social History of an Indonesian Town*, and (after new fieldwork in Morocco in 1963) *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*. He had also edited a sixth book, *Old Societies and New States* (Geertz, 1963c), on politics in the newly-independent countries of Asia and Africa, which included his much-quoted essay 'The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States'. He was, simply, the world's best-known authority on post-colonial Indonesian society at the time, and it was hardly possible to discuss any aspect of Indonesian society, culture or politics without reference to Geertz's work.

Geertz had undertaken long periods of field research in both Kediri (East Java, 1953-4) and Bali (1958), two regions in which the bulk of the killings had occurred and which had been marked by violent political conflicts both before and after his fieldwork.

While his long field visits both took place several years before 1965-66, a few

years after the massacres Geertz had the opportunity to revisit both his Balinese and Javanese field research sites. In his Balinese field research village, he learned that the killings had taken place in a single night, when 30 families were burned alive in their houses; in Pare (Kediri) the killings had gone on for about a month (Geertz 1995: 8).

In 1971, while on a consulting mission for the Ford Foundation, Geertz had spent time in social science faculties on several Indonesian university campuses; in some of them as many as one-third of all staff had lost their jobs in the anti-communist purges of 1966-7. During this visit he had also spent time in Jakarta as guest of the Ford Foundation, an agency which, having close connections to the US embassy and the CIA as well as the Indonesian military and cabinet, was well in touch with the emerging facts about the involvement of the US government and the Indonesian army in orchestrating the anti-PKI campaigns of 1965-66.

For all these reasons, Geertz was, at that time, probably as well informed as any foreign scholar about the actors and processes of Indonesia's massacres, both at national and at local level. Like many others, I expected that Geertz would sooner or later decide to put this knowledge to use in one of the typical, reflective essays for which he had become so famous, to help us understand this extraordinary and dreadful tragedy in Indonesia's post-colonial experience. So far as I know, however, no such essay exists. In the twenty years that followed the killings Geertz alluded to them in only a few scattered references.

Geertz's avoidance of any serious discussion of the Indonesian mass murders of 1965-66, and what they mean for our understanding of Indonesian politics, is both puzzling and revealing. This does seem to be a good example of what Wertheim in his later years called the "sociologists' blind spots", or the "sociology of ignorance" [Wertheim (1984) (1975)]. One dimension of this, about which Wertheim has written, is Geertz' chronic blindness to class inequalities in Javanese society. Many young researchers of the 1970s, both Indonesian and foreign, had become convinced that the picture of harmonious, poverty-sharing village communities established in such writings as *Agricultural Involution* was not right. As Wertheim remarked, Geertz's vision of rural Javanese society mirrored the blindness of colonial and post-colonial élites, whose idea of the harmonious and homogeneous village community was derived from, and promoted by, the village élite themselves (Wertheim 1975: 177-214; cf. Utrecht 1973: 280). There is certainly a striking lack of fit between Geertz's accounts of

Javanese homogeneous rural and small-town culture and the many violent political conflicts in the region both before and after his fieldwork.

But the few scattered comments on the killings which Geertz did make during these years (and which we will summarize below) suggest also the weaknesses of a reliance on cultural explanations of Indonesian collective political violence. This was the type of explanation prevailing at the time among Western media and semi-popular authors; an outbreak of mass communal frenzy, based on pent-up resentment at the leftists' undermining of core (Balinese or Javanese) values of harmony and order. In most accounts, the killings burst suddenly on the scene, and then stopped just as suddenly; see for example the accounts of journalist John Hughes (1967), Rand Corporation and CIA author Guy Pauker (1968) or the later memoirs of Marshall Green, who had been US Ambassador in Jakarta at the time of the coup (Green 1990).

In 1966, in a short article called "Are the Javanese mad?" Geertz had criticized one type of (psycho) cultural explanation, as offered by Herbert Luethy. Geertz alluded to an estimate of 100,000 dead (following the US embassy's estimates, to be seen in the now-declassified US Department of State archives). In 1972, in an after word to the edited book on *Culture and Politics in Indonesia* (Holt, Anderson and Siegel 1972) - a book whose chapters do not mention the killings, having been written some years earlier - Geertz alludes to a quarter of a million killed, showing again that he was aware of the emerging reports and new estimates; he offers little by way of explanation but writes a general defense of 'cultural' theories of Indonesian politics, the general idea that "a country's politics reflect the design of its culture" (Geertz 1972:319). The savage aftermath of the bungled October 1 coup, he writes "brought to open view the cultural disarray fifty years of political change had created, advanced, dramatized, and fed upon". He also remarks that none of the eruptions of great domestic violence seen in the Third world (in India, the Congo, Biafra, Jordan) have been "more shattering than the Indonesian, nor more difficult to evaluate" (1972: 332).

The following year, in a 1973 postscript to his (pre-1965) article on primordialism, Geertz described the "several months of extraordinary popular savagery [...] directed against individuals considered to be followers of the Indonesian communist party [...] Several hundred thousand people were massacred, largely villagers by others villagers (although there were some army executions as well) and in Java at least, mainly along ... primordial lines — pious Moslems killing Indic syncretists" (Geertz, 1973: 282).



In the same year Geertz wrote a chilling footnote, almost an aside, in the landmark 'cockfight' article on Bali, where the killing had been relatively more severe than in any other region:

"That what the cockfight has to say about Bali is not altogether without perception and the disquiet it expresses about the general pattern of Balinese life is not without reason as attested to by the fact that in two weeks of December 1965 [...] between forty and eighty thousand Balinese (in a population of about 2 million) were killed, largely by one another [...] This is not to say, of course, that the killings were caused by the cockfight, could have been predicted on the basis of it, or were some sort of enlarged version of it with real people in place of the cocks - all of which is nonsense. It is merely to say that if one looks at Bali ... also through the medium of its cockfights, the fact that the massacre occurred seems, if no less appalling, less like a contradiction to the laws of nature" (ibid.: 452).

For those who manage to find their way through this tortuous prose, it is clear that Geertz is suggesting that the killings do somehow express the same deep, suppressed cultural lust for cruelty and violence that he had discerned in the Balinese cockfight.

Such 'cultural' accounts of the massacres, in both Java and Bali, became increasingly untenable as the years passed and more information became public. There is a stark contrast between Geertz's apparent ignorance or blindness on these events, and the careful explorations and analyses of the killings at local or regional level by other scholars, like Robert Hefner (1990, Ch. 7) and Geoffrey Robinson in Bali (Robinson 1995). On Bali, Geoffrey Robinson's historical account of political conflict along class, caste and ideological lines offers a powerful counterpoint to *aliran*- and 'primordality'-centred views (Robinson, 1995; Sidel, 1997). Robinson, and more recently John Roosa have shown clearly that the army was not only present at, but actively orchestrated the killings, whose onset coincided with the army's eastward progress through Central and East Java and Bali. The killings were supported by a powerful propaganda machine which disseminated myths about the depravity of communist men and women, and the existence of death-lists drawn up by the PKI: "it is clear that the military bears the largest share of responsibility and the killings represented bureaucratic, planned violence rather than popular, spontaneous violence" (Roosa, 2006: 28).

It was about three decades after the massacres that Geertz finally wrote more than a few lines about the killings, devoting a few pages to a description of the

killings in and around Pare in the autobiographical book *After the Fact* (1995). By this time quite a number of authors had written accounts of the killings in the Kediri region, some based on first-hand experience (for example Walkin 1969; Rochijat 1985 ; Young 1990). Geertz had read, and cites (1995: 172 n.7), Young's account and Cribb's edited volume (1990) which summarized available information on the killings.

In the light of what was known by the mid-1990s in these and other publications (which, as already noted, Geertz had certainly read) Geertz's general account of the character of the conflicts and killings in Java and Bali is quite extraordinary:

"The failure of the palace guard coup in Jakarta at the end of September 1965 [...] led to a series of small-scale iterations of it as its example spread, place by place, across Java and on to Bali, west to east. In each place there was the initial uncertainty, lasting a day or two at most, about which way things would go. Then there was the realization on all sides, usually in the space of hours, as to which way, always the same way, things would go. Then there were the killings, halted after a while by the army" (1995: 8)

The idea that the Jakarta coup was replicated all over Java and Bali in a series of mini-coups initiated by leftists, - and that the killings of communists were therefore a response to earlier communist aggression - is unique to Geertz, and bizarre. The bold statement that the army's role was to *halt* the killings - with no mention of their role in starting them, and in the killing itself - is also extraordinary.

Geertz' account of the killings in Pare relies mainly on the 1971 account of a retired Nationalist Party leader, reproduced verbatim in a long, two-page quotation. From the old man's account, the army's involvement in, and orchestration of, the killings was clear.

"The whole population of a village would be herded onto the public square in front of the District Office by the army. They were then told to point out who was an activist and who was not. The activists were then delivered back to the people to take home and execute, or, more often, handed over to people of neighboring villages in exchange for their victims...

"In the beginning, things could have gone either way. Each side was trying to kill the other side first, and when the Communists saw that the Muslims had the upper hand, they just gave up. There was no resistance from the Left at all, once the killings began. The army ... just let the Muslim youth have their head, at least

for a while, after which they called a halt and began just arresting people and carting them off to Buru [a prison island in eastern Indonesia] or somewhere” (Geertz, 1995: 10).

In relaying the old nationalist’s account — the only version that Indonesians were permitted to parrot under the new regime — without critical comment, Geertz appears virtually to endorse the official view of the Indonesian army and the CIA, that it was a matter of ‘kill or be killed’, that the slaughter of Communists was a matter of self-defense in the face of Communist aggression, and therefore justified (Reyna, 1998). Accounts of such contested matters, however, require critical *interpretation*, which means the ethnographer has to be more than ventriloquist of his informants, but to reflect on their statements and why they may have given a particular account, and to have - or at least, to help the reader arrive at - a point of view.

What causes sociological blindness? To answer this question, we should not only look to the author’s personal politics, but also to the limitations of his analytical framework. In general, Geertz had avoided the trend in the 1970s to place issues of class, power and history more centrally in anthropology, and had stuck to a vision of cultures as systems of locally-shared symbols (and associated practices), blinding him to questions of social differentiation, social conflict, and associated negotiations and contestations over meanings. When this variety of ‘interpretive anthropology’ confronts the evidence of army orchestration of, and significant foreign intervention in, a multi-sited mass murder of these proportions, local cultural explanations are at best auxiliary, and at worst redundant, as Adam Kuper has observed.

“Geertz was surely aware of these external forces, but his analytical framework could not cope with the interplay of local, national and international politics. These matters were beyond the scope of ‘local knowledge’. The coup in the capital [...] had little to do with the local cultural and political trends that were evident in Mojokuto. Nor can the violence that it triggered even in remote areas be explained purely in local terms. [...] The massacres began only after the soldiers had spread across the country and encouraged violence, even supervising the killings. They exploited local hatreds, and found willing collaborators, but there would have been no countrywide massacres without their intervention [...] More generally, these terrible events expose the limitations of a cultural analysis of politics” (Kuper, 1999: 95-6)

For young generations, inside and outside Indonesia, who wish to learn and reflect on Indonesian history and society, these issues are still important; *Reformasi* has not removed the state-enforced 'ignorance' of the events of 1965-66. In March 2007 Attorney-General Abdul Rahman Saleh ordered the banning and burning of fourteen history textbooks, which had challenged "accepted facts" by not stating that the PKI was responsible for the September 30<sup>th</sup> Movement. Meanwhile, numerous history texts that do not even mention the killings are approved and available in bookshops (Tan, 2008).

Sociological 'ignorance' and 'blind spots' are perhaps too passive as metaphors for what has been discussed here, where the researcher/author is not unaware of things but makes a choice not to include them in his frame of reference. The blind and the ignorant, in general, are not busy making themselves or others blind and ignorant; what Wertheim drew to our attention, in contrast, was a process by which elites, and scholars, *choose* to describe societies and history in ways which make both themselves and others blind to social reality.

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# Professional Blindness And Missing The Mark - Postscript



In this book we presented six short studies on political crises that occurred during the first two decades of the existence of the Republic of Indonesia. The articles are mainly based on source material that until recently had escaped the attention or had only been analyzed selectively. In all these cases ignorance played a role, resulting either from lack of knowledge or unwillingness to take note of relevant information. From a wider range of possible options, four of the most important causal factors are discussed in the present volume.

The first factor (I) is formed by the policy of governments (and other owners of information) of closing their more sensitive archives and other sources of information for political reasons for a given period. Normally, a way out is offered by the handling of fixed terms and legal facilities such as the US Freedom of Information Act. The researcher may be able to speed up the opening up of the archives he wishes to see by calling on those kinds of acts. Some leeway may be created this way, depending upon the democratic disposition of the authorities in charge, or the sensitivity of the material. When this does not work, we come upon a second and more serious category (II), that is to say the world of secrecy, where the powers that be try to hide their involvement in morally or politically reproachable affairs in the past, or present them in a form more amenable to their actual interests. This brings us to the third category (III), made up of academics and the like that for reasons of opportunity or fixed convictions tend to look away when confronted with evidence that does not fit in with earlier hard won and widely accepted theories. These are found in all walks of academic life. Linked to this, but defined here as a fourth category (IV), are the sentiments of participants in past events, who tend to reject analyses that do not fit their personal memories. Often, journalists can be found in in this same group.

We derived the Ignorance concept from Wertheim's last Master Course from 1972/1973, when he warned his master students against the neoliberalism that was entering social sciences at the time, by taking the individual as the starting point for the comparative study of society. Although the term neoliberalism has different meanings in different fields of research, Wertheim focused on the neoliberal fixation on the trading individual and its rejection of structuralism in the study of history. He dived into the history of the sociology of knowledge and made students aware of the arguments behind these constructions. He argued that they had been helpful in analyzing the historical roots of social inequality and oppression, and illustrated this with examples from ignorance cases from the history of the Netherlands Indies. In these articles we follow the trail a bit further into the first decades of Indonesian independence.

The early stages of the Indonesian revolution created a multitude of ideologically driven political and military groups, under the umbrella of a president who desperately tried his best to keep the fragments together and provide them with a view of the country in order to unite them under the flag of independence. At the time, Indonesia failed to create a centralized and institutionalized state system.

Policy making was a matter of networking, trading and sharing power with activists that claimed imagined institutional positions, as well as manipulating information and managing rumors to mobilize followers and supporters for their aims. After 1950, the political, military and cultural fragments that survived the war against the Dutch continued to wage their own battles. They did so up to 1965 and after. The Cold War context was the framework in which these battles took place. It provided the groups with plenty opportunities to try to get foreign support for domestic action, either threatening the president's position or supporting it. All crises studied in this book were domestic affairs indeed. Any links of revolutionary movement members to the outside world were of an opportunistic nature, united only by a drive towards independence. They all strived after some form of independence, but it was always one of their own making. The leaders of the 1948 Affair and the initiators from the GK30S had a decidedly different state in mind than the various Papuan concepts of Independence. So there was ample room for disagreement and internal rivalry. President Sukarno in particular excelled at changing partners for the sake of keeping upright the values of Revolution and Independence as he saw fit during the first twenty years of Indonesia's existence.

Now let us take a look at the articles. To start with, we plainly asked the authors to discuss an event from the first decades of the Indonesian state, where the aspect of 'ignorance' or 'blank spot' might be relevant. This 'free for all' - approach worked out well. Ignorance showed up in different forms and in all four categories mentioned above. To begin with the research on the Indonesian camps for Indo-Europeans, founded by the Republic of Indonesia during the Bersiap period (1945-1946). For most of the inmates it had been a time of misery and separation from friends and family that bereft them for months and even years from a return to the normalcy they had hoped for after the end of the war with Japan. After their repatriation (or emigration) to The Netherlands, the memories to these camps were pushed away as much as possible. From 1969 on, when the Dutch archives were gradually opened up, these camps were studied seriously for the first time, however only summarily, and more often than not in the margin of the broader story of the demise of the Netherlands Indies. It led to rather negative judgments as to the physical and moral qualities of these camps, in line with the material consulted. They were described as internment camps, mainly set up by the Indonesian leaders to prevent the Indonesian youth from joining the Dutch army in their struggle against the Indonesian pemudas, and in order to use



them and their parents as hostages in negotiations with the Dutch. This negative judgment rang a bell with many camp survivors living in The Netherlands, since it confirmed their bad memories. This remained the case until only recently, when the topic was picked up by Mary van Delden, resulting in a dissertation in 2009. Van Delden had more archival material at her disposal than her predecessors did for her study, complemented with a series of interviews with former inmates and a number of talks with Indonesians who had participated in running the camps. The result was a decided revision of the earlier views. Her overall impression was that these camps were created upon orders of the Republican leadership to protect people against the aggression of the young Indonesian revolutionaries and to demonstrate to the Allied command on Java that they were quite able to operate as a responsible government. Understandably, this more positive point of view annoyed former inmates while at the same time being satisfactory to surviving Indonesian freedom fighters. Apparently, the voices of the Indonesians involved, together with a more lenient judgment on the part of some of the former Dutch prisoners, had led the author to come up with this revisionist approach. However, it was also the result of a better reading of the available archives and documentary editions. Viewed from the vantage point of our study of ignorance, we can say that in this case most markers point towards the factors III and IV as the main causes of this reversal. The greater distance in time, as well as a willingness to listen to the other party, must have led to a more complete interpretation of material that has been available for a long time. Although this is probably not the last to be said on the subject, the new interpretation will definitely play a role in the future debate.

The phenomenon of historical blindness to information that has been available for a long time is apparent in all the other papers as well. We see the process at work in Coen Holtzappel's article on the so-called 1948 coup, summarizing the analysis by General Nasution who played an important role in this event. During his retirement in the 1980s, Nasution wrote a well-documented study on the Indonesian war of independence, including the Madiun Affairs of 1948. Nasution's analysis differs from existing ones in four ways. First, he called the 1948 event an insurrection and not a coup. It was a point of view that violated President Sukarno's original coup condemnation and drew attention to the military roots and side of the Madiun Affairs. The coup accusation proclaimed at 19 September 1948 referred to a communist setup, when the communist party PKI actually had no part in the local seize power that was the Madiun Affair. Second, the

movement from which it resulted was a combined military and political affair with definite military roots. Third, Nasution created a reconstruction of the prologue of the affair and its aftermath from a military as well as a political viewpoint. Fourth, Nasution showed that the president's coup accusation was primarily a preventive measure. The communist party PKI had not proclaimed a coup d'état. Instead the president used the local seize power to put a stop to the escalating military and political efforts to pressure him into quitting negotiations with the Dutch and launching an all-out guerrilla war against the Dutch troops. The president did not give in and a few commanders of the 29th Brigade seized power in Madiun in September 1948. They called on the people to follow their protest. Sukarno's coup accusation focused on the Communist Party PKI that tried to organize support of the military protest, but was not involved in the seize power.

There are many conceivable causes for the unfamiliarity in the West with Nasution's reconstruction of the Madiun Affair. Most of them he mentioned himself. One of them certainly is that his original analysis is rather voluminous and was written in the Indonesian language and was never translated. It did not get much attention outside of Indonesia. Another reason might be that due to bad memories, left wing critics saw, and still see, Nasution as a communist hater, the man who crushed communist party PKI in 1948. There is just no way he could be impartial. According to Nasution himself, he followed the president's orders to devise a plan of action against the protesting troops and the PKI, that subsequently was accorded by an emergency session of the cabinet and implemented by loyal troops, including Nasution's Siliwangi Division. His analysis is well documented and touches on all aspects and groups that played a role in the prologue of the Madiun Affairs, in particular the ministry of defense, the regional army commands, the village militias and the PKI. Other factors might have contributed to his obscurity among left wingers, such as his Dutch education, his Sumatran decent, and his creation of the much-hated West Java based Siliwangi Division that won the president's trust, whereas units from other regions remained in the background. In this article we mostly see Ignorance Mark II, III and IV: The Indonesian government that sticks to the official coup accusation, academic fixations and bad memories of surviving victims.

The Thirtieth September Movement (G30S) of 1965 discussed by Holtzappel offers another example of the docility of analysts regarding authoritative political judgments, but a much more complicated one. Holtzappel's re-study points at

three cases of ignorance. First, local commander General Suharto, who made his first grab for power on the same day the G30S began, 1 October 1965, styled the movement as a communist coup right from the start. His example was followed by most Western analysts up to the present day, even when they had doubts about the tenability of the accusation. The accusation was a major political fact in itself. Second, by taking that stand, they refused to take note of the defense evidence provided by the leader of the movement - palace guard commander Untung - as well as CC PKI Politburo member Njono who supported the movement from the outside with civil auxiliary units. Their evidence, contained in their recall of their initial and enforced coup confessions, showed that the G30S had support from authorities and government agencies that belonged to the president's entourage. The movement opted for an action against the suspected Council of Generals that planned a coup. Even General Suharto played a role in it, since he helped Untung collect reliable elite troops for the G30S. Third, PKI leader hacked Untung's action to rebuild it in a broad military-political front against the Council of Generals called the Thirtieth September Movement G30S. The plan for the operation focused on a suspicious army doctrine called Tri Ubaja Sakti (TUS, Three Holy Promises) accorded by the president earlier in 1965. According to PKI leader Aidit, in some aspects it threatened the implementation of the state and political reform accorded in the Bogor Declaration of December 1964. The ignorance history in this case showed several stages. General Suharto discredited the recalls of Untung and Njono's earlier coup confessions, by calling them perjury and lies. Western analyses still balance between Suharto's coup accusation and the recalls of the two suspects that are still doubted by Western analysts and communists. Ignorance types III and IV apply to this case.

Drooglever shows in his article that Papua history offers a fourth instance of ignorance, a result of the limited interest among researchers for the meaning of Papua nationalism. For a long time it was mainly regarded as a plaything of Dutch foreign minister Joseph Luns, only accepted as a living force years later, after the downfall of president Suharto. Here as well the reasons for that ignorance are manifold. For long, the fixed focus of academics and much of the reading public was on the struggle for independence of the Indonesian state at large, and the idea of conflicting notions of statehood ran counter to the concepts of the Indonesian authorities as well as most foreign academics. The former effectively closed off the territory and its related archives to academic researchers, and the latter hardly protested. The ongoing unrest in West New Guinea, if noted at all, was easily cast aside as the result of ill-advised Dutch policies. So, Papua life

became a hidden factor as soon as the first Indonesian troops and administrators entered the picture in October 1962, and still today it is a tricky endeavor for a student to enter the field and cope with the wrath of the Indonesian authorities. Here, a mixture of intimidation, fixed research agendas and opportunism combine to isolate the Papua world. From 1962 onwards, factor II must be regarded as the main explanation for the ignorance, but never alone. The forces of opportunism (III) are always present.

A fifth instance of ignorance could be brought forward in the study of the 1965-1966 massacres. Up to now, interest in the ordeal has been rather meager. Moreover, students of the episode have ignored or denied the atrocities against members of the communist women organization Gerwani in a specific gender aspect of the mass murders. They also ignored how the Suharto regime subsequently legitimized its existence by the imagery on the national monument for the murdered generals. At that prominent place, Gerwani women are imagined as an uncivilized wild creature not worthy of existence, whereas the docile Javanese housewife is shown to be the proper pillar of the Suharto regime. A clear case of Ignorance Marks II and III.

Our last case of ignorance regards the misunderstanding of a renowned American cultural anthropologist who refused to instantly condemn the Bali massacres of 1966 as immoral until he had found what triggered the murders according to his informants. His final conclusion matches the findings from the revisit of the G30S. Yet, the researcher's initial reluctance to condemn the massacres as immoral perplexed colleagues who expected a fast moral condemnation. It can of course be argued that it is the task of historians and other social scientists to sharply divide proper factual analysis from moral condemnation. They represent two different paths of action that should not be mixed up. That being said, we may still feel entitled to discern the forces of Ignorance Mark III at work in this case.

So far our six cases. From this hasty survey we may deduce that in nearly all of them the element of Ignorance played a deciding part, and that its prevalence can be attributed to a combination of factors. It should be stated that it is not an easy task defining which was more important in each given case. Human life, and therefore human history, is a complicated matter, and difficult to compress in fixed schedules. Moreover, our schedule is far from complete, and when all relevant factors are taken into account the result will become unmanageable, and nevertheless incomplete in the end. Time and context are just as important as

factual information, and interpretation by the human mind will always be necessary to keep our work within the borders of academic decency.

So we may allow some credit to the traditional preference (be it neoliberal or not) for 'facts' and the role of the individual, and accept a limit to the drive for structural ambitions. However, good history writing is impossible without a critical mind and systematic thinking, and that is certainly a lesson Wim Wertheim wanted his students to learn.

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