

# 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 Politbiro 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 Politbiro 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 Politbiro 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](#)

September Movement As Seen By The Perpetrators. Between Registered Facts  
And Authoritative Opinions - Part Three