Problems in the historiography of the killings in Indonesia

Robert Cribb, The Australian National University

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/robert_cribb/49/
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**THE INDONESIAN KILLINGS OF 1965-1966**

Studies from Java and Bali

edited by

Robert Cribb

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|          | CHAPTER 1
|          | Problems in the History of the Killings in Java and Bali   | 2    |
|          | CHAPTER 2
|          | Changes and state power in Indonesia                       | 3    |
|          | CHAPTER 3
|          | Local and national influences in the violence of 1965     | 4    |

---

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The membership of the Australian Association for Indonesian Studies is gratefully acknowledged for its generous support of this book project.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations iii
List of Maps iv
Glossary v
List of Contributors xvi
Preface xviii

Introduction

CHAPTER 1
Problems in the historiography of the killings in Indonesia
Robert Cribb 1

Indonesia

CHAPTER 2
Gestapu and state power in Indonesia
Michael van Langenberg 45

CHAPTER 3
Local and national influences in the violence of 1965
Kenneth R. Young 63

CHAPTER 4
Making history: recent Indonesian literature and the events of 1965
Keith Foulcher 101
Java

CHAPTER 5
Rural violence in Klaten and Banyuwangi
Centre for Village Studies, Gadjah Mada University 121

CHAPTER 6
Crushing the G30S/PKI in Central Java
Dinas Sejarah TNI AD 159

CHAPTER 7
Additional data on Counter-Revolutionary Cruelty
in Indonesia, especially in East Java
Anonymous 169

CHAPTER 8
Schooling and village politics in Central Java
in the time of turbulence
Kenneth Orr 177

CHAPTER 9
The Purwodadi affair: two accounts
Maskun Iskandar and Jopie Lasut 195

CHAPTER 10
Survival: Bu Yeti's story
translated by Anton Lucas 227

Bali

CHAPTER 11
The mass killings in Bali
Robert Cribb, Soe Hok Gie et al. 241

Index 261

List of Illustrations

1. Captured PKI equipment, including bullets, berets and a bicycle pump. 12
2. How to gouge an eye: a demonstration by a captured member of the Pemuda Rakyat 36
3. One of the generals' bodies, shortly after exhaumation. After three days in the well at Lubang Buaya, the bodies had begun to decay, and the resulting disfiguration gave rise to wild rumours that the generals had been tortured before death. 48
4. Cartoon from the Muslim newspaper Duta Masyarakat of 19 October 1965, showing the PKI and its affiliated organizations lapping up the blood of the murdered generals. 50
5. Bodies of victims on the banks of the River Brantas in East Java 81
6. Frontispiece from Arswoendo Atmowiloto's Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI. The PKI, in the form of a worker and peasant brandishing a hammer and sickle, stand behind the soldiers firing on the awakened general. 112
7. From Arifin C. Noer's Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI (the violation of families by the coup plotters). 114
8. From Arifin C. Noer's Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI (the torture of the captured generals) 116
9. From Arifin C. Noer's Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI (Detail from the recovery of the bodies of the murdered generals) 118
10. Colonel Sarwo Edhie, commander of the RPKAD paracommando unit 162
11. The killing of PKI detainees 170
12. PKI detainees 205
### List of Maps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>xix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Central and East Java</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kabupaten Klaten</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Banyuwangi</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Purwodadi</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bali</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Glossary

For terms marked with an asterisk (*), see also pp. xiv - xv.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aksi sepihak</td>
<td>direct, or unilateral action by the PKI or associated organizations to implement land reform legislation in the countryside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMED, Artilleri Medan</td>
<td>Field Artillery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ansor</td>
<td>Muslim youth organization affiliated with the Nahdatul Ulama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bakul</td>
<td>small trader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bambu runcing</td>
<td>sharpened bamboo spear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAMUNAS, Badan Musyawarah Nasional</td>
<td>consultative body of ethnic Indonesian businessmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAPERKI, Badan Permusyawaratan Kewarganegaraan Indonesia</td>
<td>Deliberative Association for Indonesian Citizenship, an Indonesian Chinese political organization considered close to the PKI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BKK, Badan Koordinasi Komando Siaga</td>
<td>Coordinating Body for the Vigilance Command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNI, Barisan Nelayan Indonesia</td>
<td>Indonesian Fishermen's Front, fishermen's organization affiliated to the PKI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTI, Barisan Tani Indonesia</td>
<td>Indonesian Peasants' Front, peasant organization affiliated to the PKI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bupati*</td>
<td>'regent', head of a kabupaten, the major administrative division between province and village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUTERPRA, Bintara Urusan Territorial Pertahanan Rakyat</td>
<td>Territorial and Civil Defence Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>camat*</td>
<td>head of a kecamatan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carik</td>
<td>clerk, village secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDB, Comite Daerah Besar</td>
<td>regional committee (of the PKI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darul Islam</td>
<td>Lit. the Abode of Islam, radical Muslim movement which fought in many parts of Indonesia, especially West Java, between 1948 and the mid-1960s to establish an Islamic state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desa</td>
<td>village, a territorial administrative unit, not necessarily a physical cluster of houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DETGA, Detasemen Gerilya</td>
<td>guerrilla detachments (of the PKI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dewan Jendral</td>
<td>Council of Generals, a group of army generals allegedly plotting a military coup before 30 September 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dewan Revolusi</td>
<td>Revolutionary Council, steering body set up by the coup organizers in Jakarta and allegedly elsewhere as a kind of governing council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPR-GR, Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat-Gotong Royong</td>
<td>Gotong Royong People's Representative Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPRD, Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah</td>
<td>Regional People's Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front Nasional</td>
<td>National Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GERWANI, Gerakan Wanita Indonesia</td>
<td>Indonesian Women's Movement, women's organization close to, though not formally affiliated with the PKI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMNI, Gerakan Mahasiswa Nasional Indonesia</td>
<td>National Students' Movement of Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSNI, Gerakan Siswa Nasional Indonesia</td>
<td>Indonesian National School Pupils' Movement, affiliated to the PNI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSN, Gerakan Tiga Puluh September</td>
<td>Thirtieth September Movement, formal name of the movement which launched the coup, also known as Gestapu, Gerakan September Tiga Puluh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GWNI, Gerakan Wanita Nasional Indonesia</td>
<td>Indonesian National Women's Movement, women's organization affiliated with the PNI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPIB, Gereja Protestant Indonesia Barat</td>
<td>Protestant Church of Western Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSBI</td>
<td>Gabungan Serikat Buruh Indonesia, Federation of Indonesian Trade Unions, affiliated to the PNI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haji</td>
<td>one who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HANRA</td>
<td>Pertahanan Rakyat, People's Defence, a kind of village guard working in conjunction with the armed forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HANSIP</td>
<td>Pertahanan Sipil, Civil Defence, similar to Hanra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hari Peringatan Pancasila Sakti</td>
<td>Sacred Pancasila Memorial Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMI</td>
<td>Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam, Muslim Students' Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IKIP</td>
<td>Institut Keguruan ilmu Pendidikan, Teachers Training College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INPRES</td>
<td>Instruksi Presiden, Presidential Instruction (describing projects 'directly' initiated by the President rather than proceeding from the normal administrative process)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPI</td>
<td>Ikatan Pelajar Indonesia, Union of Students of Indonesia, affiliated to the PKI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPKI</td>
<td>Ikatan Pendukung Kemerdekaan Indonesia, League of Supporters of Indonesian Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITTB</td>
<td>Institut Teknologi Bandung, Bandung Institute of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kabupaten*</td>
<td>territorial administrative division, headed by a bupati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAMI</td>
<td>Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Indonesia, Indonesian Students' Action Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kampong</td>
<td>hamlet, cluster of dwellings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAP-Gestapu</td>
<td>Pengganyangan Gestapu, Action Command to Crush Gestapu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAPPI</td>
<td>Kesatuan Aksi Pelajar Pemuda Indonesia, Indonesian Student and Youth Action Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KASI</td>
<td>Kesatuan Aksi Sarjana Indonesia, Indonesian Graduates' Action Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kecamatan*</td>
<td>territorial administrative division between kabupaten and kelurahan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kelurahan*</td>
<td>formal administrative term for desa, or village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIAPMA</td>
<td>Konferensi Internasional Anti Pangkalan Militer Asing, International Conference against Foreign Military Bases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KODAM</td>
<td>Komando Daerah Militer*, regional military command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KODIM</td>
<td>Komando District Militer*, district military command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOPKAMTIB</td>
<td>Komando Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban, Operational Command for the Restoration of Security and Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KORAMIL</td>
<td>local military command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOREM</td>
<td>sub-district military command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOSTRAD</td>
<td>Army Strategic Reserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOTI</td>
<td>Supreme Operational Command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEKRA</td>
<td>Institute for People's Culture, cultural organization affiliated with the PKI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LKN</td>
<td>National Cultural Institute, cultural organization affiliated with the PNI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lurah*</td>
<td>village head, head of a kelurahan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modin</td>
<td>religious official who calls Muslim faithful to prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monumen Pancasila Sakii</td>
<td>Sacred Pancasila Monument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPRS</td>
<td>Provisional People's Consultative Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammadiyah</td>
<td>modernist Muslim organization, chiefly involved in religious education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NASAKOM, nasionalisme, agama, komunisme</td>
<td>Nationalism, religion, communism, official doctrine of Guided Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEKOLIM</td>
<td>Neocolonialist-imperialist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NU</td>
<td>Lit. the Awakening of the Muslim Scholars, a Muslim political party, the main vehicle for conservative Islamic scholars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPSUS</td>
<td>special operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>padi</td>
<td>unhusked rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pagar praja</td>
<td>village militia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>panglima</td>
<td>senior military commander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARKINDO, Partai Kristen Indonesia</td>
<td>Indonesian Christian (i.e. Protestant) Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patih</td>
<td>deputy to a bupati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pemuda Marhaenis</td>
<td>Marhaenist Youth, youth organization affiliated to the PNI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pemuda Pancasilais</td>
<td>Pancasila-ist Youth, general term for anti-communist youth groups not affiliated with Muslim organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pemuda Rakyat</td>
<td>People's Youth, youth organization affiliated with the PKI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEPEL RADA, Pengusaha Pelaksanaan Dwikora Daerah</td>
<td>Regional [Military] Authority to Implement Dwikora</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PEPERKUPER,
Pembantu Pelaksana Penguasa Perang

pesantren

PESINDO,
Pemuda Sosialis Indonesia

PETRUS,
penembakan misterius

petu

PGRI,
Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia
Non-Vaksentral

PII,
Pelajar Islam Indonesia

PKI,
Partai Komunis Indonesia

PNI,
Partai Nasional Indonesia

PPAN,
Persatuan Pejuang Agama dan Nasional

PPDI,
Persatuan Pamong Desa Indonesia

PUTERPRA,
Perwira Urusan Territorial dan Pertahanan Rakyat

REPELITA,
Rencana Pembangunan Lima Tahun

RPKAD,
Resimen Para Komando Angkatan Darat

RT,
Rukun Tetangga

sawah

sawah

SD,
Sekolah Dasar

SH,
sarjana hukum

SMA,
Sekolah Menengah Atas

SMEA,
Sekolah Menengah Ekonomi Atas

SMP,
Sekolah Menengah Pertama

SNMI,
Serikat Nelayan Muslimin Indonesia

Assistant Martial Law Administrator
Islamic school
Indonesian Socialist Youth
mysterious killings
gangsters
Teachers' Union of the Indonesian Republic, unaffiliated
Muslim Students of Indonesia, affiliated to former Masyumi party
Indonesian Communist Party
Indonesian Nationalist Party
Union of Religious and National (i.e. PNI) Fighters
Union of Indonesian Village Officials
Terrorist and Civil Defence Officer
Five Year Development Plan
Army Paracommando Regiment
Neighbourhood Association [head]
irrigated rice field
Primary School
a law degree
Senior Secondary School
Senior Economic Secondary School
Junior Secondary School
Indonesian Muslim Fishermen's Association
SOBSI,
Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia

SUPERSEMAR,
Surat Perintah Sebelas Maret

TKK,
Taman Kanak-kanak

TPR,
Tentara Pembebasan Rakyat

UNDANG-UNDANG Dasar '45

ZIPUR,
Zeni Tempur

NOTE ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND MILITARY TERMS

Indonesia in 1965-66 was divided administratively into a hierarchy of territorial divisions which may not be familiar to all readers of this volume. The country is divided into a number of provinces (propinsi), each headed by a governor (gubernur) and divided in turn into a number of 'reencies' (an old Dutch term), or kabupaten, headed by a regent or bupati. Beneath the kabupaten was formerly the kawedanan, headed by a wedana; this unit has now been done away with, though pembantu bupati, assistants to the bupati, play a role similar to that of wedana in some regions. The kecamatan, or district, headed by a camat, is now the principal administrative unit beneath the bupati, and the camat in turn supervises a number of kelurahan, each headed by a lurah. These were known formerly as desa, or villages, but since they were territorial units covering rice fields and forest as well as settlements, the term kelurahan is technically more accurate as well as administratively correct. Within a kelurahan are further administrative divisions, the rukun kampung and beneath it the rukun warga, consisting of no more than a few families. The term kampung (occasionally perdesaan), however, refers more commonly to a physical cluster of houses; in rural areas it is perhaps best translated as ‘hamlet’, in urban areas as ‘neighbourhood’.

Parallel to this civilian administrative structure stands the territorial administration of the Indonesian armed forces (ABRI), responsible for general supervision of security matters, broadly defined, in the countryside. Although the boundaries and status of the military and civilian territorial hierarchies do not always exactly coincide, the Komando Daerah Militer (KODAM), or regional military command, covers roughly the jurisdiction of a province, the Komando Ressort Militer (KOREM) that of a kabupaten, Komando District Militer (KODIM) that of a kawedanan, and the Komando Rayon Militer (KORAMIL) that of a kecamatan.
List of contributors

Antony Cominos is a graduate of Griffith University and currently Assistant English Teacher with the JET Programme working for the Sannohe-machi Board of Education in Sannohe, Sugisawa and Oshita Junior High Schools, Aomori Prefecture, Japan. He is author of Dwipa Nusantara Aidit: an annotated bibliography (1988) and translator of Ismid Hadad, Political culture and social justice in Indonesia (1989).

Robert Cribb is lecturer in Southeast Asian History at the University of Queensland. He is author of Gangsters and Revolutionaries: the Jakarta People’s Militia and the Indonesian Revolution (1990).


Maskun Iskandar worked as a journalist for the newspaper Indonesia Raya.


Jopie Lasut worked as a journalist for the newspaper Sinar Harapan.

Anton Lucas is senior lecturer in Asian Studies at Flinders University. He is author of One Soul, One Struggle: Region and Revolution in Indonesia (1990) and editor of Local opposition and underground resistance to the Japanese in Java 1942-1945 (1986).
Preface

This volume has its origins in a conference on 'The trauma of 1965 in Indonesia' held at Monash University in 1987 and a panel on the killings of 1965-69 at the biennial conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia in Canberra in 1988. Some of the papers for the original sessions have not been included, while others, including all the translations, were produced especially for this volume.

In accepting the task of editing the collection, I was aware, of course, that the killings are a topic of unusual sensitivity. Both in Indonesia and amongst Indonesianists there has been a deep reluctance to recall the killings and to examine them deeply or systematically. My hope is that this volume will encourage those - from both participants and observers - with memories of the events of 1965-69 to see that they are recorded, and that it will stimulate further academic investigation of what were perhaps the most traumatic years of modern Indonesian history.

I should like to thank the contributors for their cooperation and patience during the protracted compilation of this volume, as well as Ben Anderson, Ruth McVey and Ron Hatley for their encouragement and assistance with the project at various stages. The Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History at the Australian National University, the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in Wassenaar and the Department of History at the University of Queensland provided facilities for its preparation. David Bourchier and David Chandler offered much valuable help and advice throughout the editing process. Mrs Pilar van Breda-Burgueño typed several of the contributions and Ian Heyward of the Cartography Section of ANU's Research School of Pacific Studies did a fine job of preparing the maps.

Robert Cribb
November 1990
Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

PROBLEMS IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE KILLINGS IN INDONESIA

Robert Cribb

The killing of several hundred thousand people in Indonesia in the aftermath of the 1965 coup attempt of the 30 September Movement ranks as one of the twentieth century's more extensive mass murders. It is striking, however, how little prominence this event has been given in general histories of Indonesia. The massacre, it is true, is almost invariably mentioned in standard works, though authors vary widely in the detail they give. Missing in most cases, however, are attempts to explain and to draw conclusions from the killings. In most accounts, the killings burst suddenly upon

I should like to thank David Bourchier, David Chandler, Gavan Daws, Donald Denoon, Herb Feith, Jacques Leclerc, Ruth McVey, John Maxwell and Tony Reid for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this introduction. Frank Palmos was also an invaluable source of information and comment on several aspects of the question. None of them, of course, bears any responsibility for this final version.

Demonstrating an absence of attention to the massacres in the literature is obviously more difficult than demonstrating its presence. In the following works, however, all recent general histories of Indonesia, I believe that the reader will not find significant allusions to the killings in the discussion of any period other than the 1960s.

the scene and then are over, having arrived and departed with the rapidity and evanescence of a tropical thunderstorm. Historians of Indonesia seem to have found it difficult to identify both those aspects of Indonesian society might have alerted us to the fact that the killings would take place and any traces they have left on the present political order.

This is surprising, because events of this kind and magnitude often provoke deep introspection. The historiography of modern Germany, for instance, has been confronted massively by the fact of the Holocaust. The tracing of its origins and its implications for the present is one of the more important endeavours in modern German historiography. In an earlier century, the massacre of French Protestants in Paris on St Bartholomew’s Day, 24 August 1572, is seen by many as a pivotal event in European history. Similarly, the historiography of Cambodia has been transformed irreversibly by the killings carried out under Pol Pot. And although Japanese historians tend to avoid the issue of Japanese military violence before and during World War II, it is clearly a major preoccupation amongst Western writers who see it as a possible clue to contemporary and future Japanese patterns of behaviour.

The purpose of this volume therefore is to begin mapping the significance of the 1965-66 killings for Indonesian history, both by bringing together what is known about them and by offering a number of fresh interpretations of the events and their significance. It is a first attempt rather than a final statement, for the analysis of the killings presents an unusually difficult set of problems in contemporary Indonesian history, problems of information, problems of philosophy and problems of interpretation. By confronting these problems, however, we take at least one step towards resolving them.

2 The St Bartholomew massacre offers fascinating comparisons with the Indonesian killings. Both were intended to extirpate a radical political movement which appeared to threaten the existing political order. Both sets of victims were not only tainted with treason but also associated with foreign powers, the Netherlands and England in the case of the Huguenots, China in the case of the PKI. Both were sprung upon with little warning and went to their deaths with little resistance, pleading loyalty to their respective national leaders, Charles IX and Sukarno. And both massacres were initiated by the authorities but carried out to a large extent by mobs.

3 Lea Jellicoe describes the deep reluctance of kampung dwellers in Jakarta to discuss the killings or even to admit any knowledge of them. See Lea Olga Jellicoe, ‘Kebun Kacang: an oral history of a poor inner city community in Jakarta from the 1930s to the 1980s’ (PhD thesis, Monash University, 1987), pp. 64, 299.
laid emphasis on ideological correctness (and often political caution) rather than journalistic investigation. In the two accounts of the 1969 Purwodadi killings translated in this volume, we see investigative journalists back at work, but the sensitivity of the authorities to their questions in this case indicates the immense difficulties which would have faced any probing of the earlier, greater killing.

Even after the worst of the killings had passed and the trails which might have led to individual killers had gone cold, Indonesians continued to be most reluctant to record any details of the killings. As Michael van Langenb erg suggests, a sense of shame for the blood-letting may be partly responsible for this; although many Indonesians today express satisfaction, even pride, at the elimination of the communist party, few seem to think that manner of the party’s destruction was praiseworthy. Thus, to my knowledge, only three substantial accounts of the killing have been prepared by Indonesians, aside from the official reports. One, translated in this volume as ‘Additional data on counter-revolutionary cruelty in Indonesia, especially in East Java’, was probably written some time in the 1970s and is a catalogue of incidents apparently compiled from the reports of others. The second is a brief but gripping personal account, written in 1989 by a member of a left-wing youth organization, probably Pemuda Rakjat, who escaped death himself but witnessed many killings from hiding. His account, translated as ‘By the banks of the Brantas’, has recently been published in the West. In neither case, however, do we know the identity of the author or any of the circumstances which led to the writing of these accounts. The third is a fascinating memoir by Pipit Rochijat, entitled, ‘Am I PKI or Non-PKI?’, especially interesting because it speculates on the significance of the killings for contemporary Indonesia. A far richer source for Indonesian visions of the killings is a group of short stories which appeared in Indonesian literary magazines in the years immediately after the killings. Collected and translated by Harry Aveling, these stories give us a sharp image of what the killings may have meant to a range of Indonesians, though their literary form and the political circumstances of their composition make them no more than a partial mirror of the events concerned.

From the start, too, there has been something of an absence of international moral outrage at the killings which has discouraged outside investigation. The killings took place at the height of the Cold War, when the West felt itself to be engaged in a global struggle with communism which would determine the course of history for decades or centuries to come. Counting the casualties in this struggle was secondary to rolling back the so-called communist tide, hence the often quoted callousness of Time magazine’s description of the PKI’s suppression as ‘The West’s best news for years in Asia’. Western governments and much of the Western media preferred Suharto and the New Order to the PKI and the Old, and have been in many cases comfortable with the simple statement that some hundreds of thousands of “communists” were killed. A close investigation of who was being killed - and why - ran the risk not just of complicating a simple story but of uncovering skeletons in the New Order.

---

4 See Crouch, Army and politics, pp. 65-66; Oey Hong Lee, Indonesian government and press during Guided Democracy (Hull: University of Hull, 1971).

5 Appendix A: Excerpt from "By the banks of the Brantas": an eye-witness account of the 1965 killings, Injustice, persecution, eviction: a human rights update on Indonesia & East Timor (New York: Asia Watch, 1990), pp. 87-90.


8 See, for example, the subdued reporting of Donald Kirk, ‘Bali exercises an evil spirit’, The Reporter 15 December 1965, pp. 42-53. No less an authority than the United States Central Intelligence Agency has commented:

In terms of the numbers killed, the anti-PKI massacres in Indonesia rank as one of the worst mass murders of the 20th century, along with the Soviet purges of the 1930s, the Nazi mass murders during the Second World War, and the Maoist bloodbath of the early 1950s. In this regard, the Indonesian coup is certainly one of the most significant events of the 20th century, far more significant than many other events that have received much greater publicity. (Central Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Intelligence, Intelligence Report: Indonesia - 1965, the coup that backfired [Washington DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 1968], p. 71n).

for the killings in Washington DC does not demand detailed information on the killings themselves.\footnote{11}

Political reasons apart, our comparatively meagre knowledge of the killings is partly a consequence of the fact that the relatively efficient record-keeping of the Nazis in Europe and the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia had no parallel in Indonesia. Uncertainty about the identity of the killers is a major obstacle to analysis of the significance of any killings, and these problems of information hover over any attempt to go beyond the initial journalistic descriptions of the killings. Uncertainty extends to the number of people who were killed. The nature of the killing in 1965-66 - commonly dispersed, nocturnal and by small groups - was such that no-one could possibly have had first or even second hand involvement in more than a tiny proportion of the total number of deaths. Any estimate of the total number who perished must therefore be a composite of numerous reports, themselves probably also composites of reports. The first official figure for the number killed was 78,500\footnote{12}, and was produced by a Fact Finding

\begin{itemize}

  \item[11] For examples of this genre of writing, see David Ransom, 'The Berkeley Mafia and the Indonesian massacre', Ramparts 9 no. 4 (Oct. 1970), pp. 27-29, 40-49; Ralph W. McGhee, Deadly deceits: my 25 years in the CIA (New York: Sheridan Square, 1983), pp. 37-58, and Gabriel Kolko, Confronting the Third World: US foreign policy 1945-1980 (New York: Pantheon, 1989), pp. 177-183. The issue re-surfaced recently with claims, confirmed by United States former diplomats and intelligence officials, that embassy and CIA officials provided the Indonesian army with a list of five thousand names of PKI leaders and cadres. Embassy officials reportedly checked off the people on the list as they were then killed. Five thousand was only a tiny proportion of the total number killed, and several observers have pointed out that the Indonesian army would hardly have needed American lists to identify the top echelon of the party. The significance of the lists, however, was probably that they listed clandestine party members, agents and associates, especially within the armed forces, rather than well-known public figures such as Abid. In the shadowy world of Indonesian intelligence and espionage, where the PKI and the army were each infiltrated by the other's agents and basic loyalty was virtually impossible to pick, Indonesian military intelligence authorities must have been aware of the possibility that PKI agents would plant lists in order to eliminate anti-communist officers. Under these circumstances, the American lists would have come into the army's hands with an air of reliability which no Indonesian document could have enjoyed. Thus, although the lists contributed to the total death toll in only a minor way, they were an important element in the destruction of PKI influence. See Kathy Kadane, 'Ex-agents say CIA compiled death lists for Indonesians', San Francisco Examiner 20 May 1990, pp. 1, 22; for sceptical responses, see Peter Hastings, 'A chilling story that just doesn't add up', Sydney Morning Herald 28 May 1990; Michael Vatikitis and Mike Fonte, 'Turtle of ghosts', Far Eastern Economic Review 2 August 1990, pp. 18-19.

  \item[12] Crouch, Army and politics, p. 155.
\end{itemize}
Commission under Major-General Sumarno, appointed by Sukarno in late December 1965. This figure has been derided as too low, even by members of the commission itself, it was produced in any case well before the killings were over. It may nonetheless represent the number of identifiable individuals whose place and time of death can be stated with some certainty. How high our estimates for the total death toll go above this figure, however, depends on judgement more than evidence. Some suggestions are as high as two million. The only serious attempt to calculate the number killed on the basis of direct evidence was a survey conducted apparently by KOPKAMTIB using 150 'university graduates' in 1966 and made selectively available to various Western journalists and academics. This report, said to have been twenty-five pages in length, concluded that around one million people died, 800,000 of them in Central and East Java, 100,000 each in Bali and Sumatra. The reported scale of the investigation suggests that it was a genuine attempt to obtain reliable figures, but its conclusions cannot be accepted with any certainty.

The scope for the over-reporting of deaths is clear. Individual incidents may have been reported many times. Several observers who cast doubt on the higher estimates have pointed out that a village burnt or a body floating down a river may be noticed by many people and recorded many times. Part of the anecdotal evidence for the scale of the killings has been the story of householders in Surabaya rising each morning to push back into the canals bodies which had been on their back landings during the night, an event that must have given rise to much double counting. The more horrific of incidents, moreover, were perhaps more likely to have been reported in the first place, and if these were interpreted as typical rather than exceptional cases the figure for the entire country would have been inflated. Nor is it impossible that figures were more or less deliberately inflated in the process of collection. Village heads, from whom many of the local estimates were collected, probably felt considerable incentive to demonstrate that vigorous action had been taken locally against the communists and would have been inclined to report that their people had killed many communist, whether or not this was the case. Once the notion that a huge massacre had taken place was firmly established, researchers would have been under some pressure to show they had been doing their work by coming up with suitably large figures. The ease with which large, round figures can be banded about demands caution in the absence of firm data. Some scepticism towards the figure of one million is also suggested by the absence of demographic evidence indicating major population loss. Suggestions that one third of the population in the Solo region were killed are not borne out by later population figures. Large numbers of people from certain occupation groups were missing when the dust of the killings had settled. Teachers, for instance, poorly looked after under Guided Democracy, had been extensively recruited by the PKI as the key to influencing future generations (see Kenneth Orr's chapter), and they were consequently an especial target of the violence of 1965-66. Another report claims that the price of Balinese wood carvings and of Javanese batik cloth soared in 1966 because many of the artists had been associated with the left wing cultural organizations LEKRA and had disappeared or been killed. The fate of specific groups such as these, however, cannot be taken as representative of that of the population as a whole.

The absence of reports in later years of mass graves being uncovered, as has happened recently in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, is also a little puzzling, especially given the continuing construction boom in New

---

13 One account, apparently referring to this report, cites an official figure of 180,000. See Horace Sutton, 'Indonesia's night of terror', Saturday Review 4 February 1967, p. 27.

14 Crouch, Army and politics, p. 155; Hughes, Indonesian upheaval, pp. 185-186.

15 Bridget Mellor, 'Political killings in Indonesia', New Statesman 5 August 1966, p. 189. This figure is also said to have been reached by emigre members of the PKI, though I have not been able to discover a reference to this in print. In 1978, the party exiles in China were still citing a figure of around half a million. See Ibrahim Isi, 'Suharto's swindle in releasing political prisoners', OISRAA Bulletin, special edition (Jan. 1978), p. 1.

16 [Frank Palmos], 'One million dead?', The Economist 20 August 1966, pp. 727-728; this article appeared in a slightly different form as Frank Palmos, 'Massacre toll in Indonesia', The Advertiser (Adelaide), 6 August 1966. See also Bruce Cleland, 'Greatest bloodbath in Indonesia's history', Dawn 2 August 1966. The KOPKAMTIB report on which Palmos based his story has never been published, though other researchers have described to me seeing material which was probably the same document.


Order Indonesia. It is possible that grave sites, selected on the whole for their secluded location, are still known and are avoided for all forms of construction; there are sporadic accounts of rice fields in parts of Central Java which are no longer tilled because they conceal mass graves. It is likely, too, that anyone discovering a mass grave would think carefully before reporting it, if only because the response of the authorities to this kind of discovery has not been tested. The authorities would not necessarily consider a mass grave to be politically damaging, since it could readily be attributed to Communist massacres of opponents in 1965 or even 1948, but in the absence of strong reasons for wanting to find graves - reasons of the kind which have led to the exhumations in Cambodia and Eastern Europe - the authorities would probably prefer to leave the ground undisturbed.

Conditions of burial, however, may be most important in accounting for this lack of skeletal evidence. Reports of the killings refer to bodies being dumped in a wide variety of locations, from rivers, isolated forests and rubber plantations to cane fields, wells and shallow urban graves. There is also some indication that significant numbers were dumped in the limestone caves of southern Central Java; this was certainly done systematically during the so-called petrus killings of the early 1980s. In most of these locations, a combination of abundant rain and a high level of acidity caused by decaying plant material would have quickly reduced skeletons to fragmentary remains, difficult for anyone but an expert to identify with certainty. In some circumstances, decay can make bones unrecognizable within a year, though survival up to fifty years is not unusual. Perhaps the best chance of preservation is in the limestone caves, but burial places there are likely to be disturbed only by open cut mining on behalf of cement factories, itself a rather destructive activity.19

On the other hand, there must also have been considerable scope for under-reporting of the killings. So many killings took place over many months that keeping an accurate track of deaths would have been difficult even if the operation had been the kind of coordinated genocide carried out by the Nazis. No group of investigators could have surveyed all the killings which took place given the time and resources available. It is impossible to know whether people actually involved in the killings would have reported accurately - if they had indeed bothered to keep close count or would have exaggerated or under-estimated, but it is likely that they were reluctant to be specific and would have under-stated their own personal involvement. There is ample incidental evidence of reluctance on the part of killers to be identified. Some executioners wore masks; a Western visitor to Kupang in Timor was invited by the local army and police to attend some of the killings, but only on condition that he take part, so that he would share the complicity of the killers. It has also been reported that in many cases party members were killed along with their entire families in order to prevent the possibility of retaliation in the future.20 Reluctance to report accurately would have been even stronger where killings were used as an opportunity to even old scores. Paul Webb cites a case of villagers punished because they killed non-communists and this possibility must have inhibited, at very least, the full disclosure of events.21

In the years immediately after the killings, therefore, scholars on the whole discounted both the low Fact Finding Commission figure and the high KOPKAMTIB one, settling, mainly on the grounds of plausibility, for something around a quarter of a million.22 A third set of official figures became available in July 1976, when security officials, including the KOPKAMTIB commander Admiral Sudomo suggested that somewhere

---


22 See, for example, Peter Polomka, Indonesia since Sukarno (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 161.
Table I: Number of people killed according to various estimates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Source</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kirk (1966)</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson and McVey (1966)</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turner (1969)</td>
<td>300,000-600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King (1966)</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topping (1966)</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Economist, citing KOPKAMTIB (1966)</td>
<td>150,000-400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mellor (1966)</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wertheim (1966)</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hughes (1967)</td>
<td>400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact Finding Commission (late 1965)</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact Finding Commission member</td>
<td>78,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam Malik</td>
<td>780,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.N. Palac</td>
<td>160,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington Post</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contaray (1967)</td>
<td>500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant (1967)</td>
<td>100,000-200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vittachi (1967)</td>
<td>200,000-300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paget (1967/68)</td>
<td>300,000-500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moser (1968)</td>
<td>100,000-300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sullivan (1969)</td>
<td>400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyon (1970)</td>
<td>300,000-500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henderson (1970)</td>
<td>200,000-500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahm (1971)</td>
<td>400,000-200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sloan (1971)</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lomkin (1971)</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legge (1972)</td>
<td>150,000-300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neil (1973)</td>
<td>200,000-250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmier (1973)</td>
<td>750,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sievers (1974)</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repression and Exploitation (1974)</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admiral Sudomo, KOPKAMTIB COMMANDER (July 1976)</td>
<td>500,000,000-1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fryer &amp; Jackson (1977)</td>
<td>450,000-500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pluvier (1978)</td>
<td>100,000-500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caldwell and Utrecht (1979)</td>
<td>500,000-1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legge (1980)</td>
<td>500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederick (1981)</td>
<td>250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson (1985)</td>
<td>500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mody (1987)</td>
<td>750,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mody (1987)</td>
<td>500,000,000-1,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Cited in Hughes.

Note: Superscript figures refer to the footnote in which full bibliographical details of the work cited can be found. In citing these estimates, I have omitted indefinite qualifiers such as 'more than' and 'up to'.

---

around half a million people had died. It is not clear what evidence, if any, was used to reach this new figure, but it has prompted a general upward revision of the casualty figure and probably a little more interest in the earlier KOPKAMTIB figure. We are unlikely now to find empirical evidence to resolve this question.

Problems of philosophy

Behind the technical problems lie deep theoretical ones. Atrocity is an abiding source of fascination. "One of the great needs of the twentieth century is a scientific study of atrocity and of the moral issues involved," wrote Herbert Butterfield. A major reason for this is the window which atrocity appears to open into the human soul. Some time after an earlier massacre in Indonesia, that of the Chinese in Batavia in 1740, a Dutch participant wrote:

I myself also had to join in. As I knew that my Chinese neighbour had a fat pig, I intended to take it away from him and bring it into my house. When my boss, the master-carpenter, saw this, he slapped me and told me to kill the Chinese first and then to plunder. I therefore took a rice pounder and with it beat to death my neighbour with whom I so often had drunk and dined.

As far as atrocity literature goes, this is mild stuff, but it illustrates a concern for the tearing question: how can human beings treat each other in so inhumane a way? The mind of the torturer, the hangman, the mass murderer has been a perennial fascination for novelists and historians alike. This, I think, is one of the main reasons why events such as the Holocaust and the killings in Cambodia continue to demand attention.

---

their followers of their obligations as good Muslims, rather than changing the rules of the game. In the context of the time, *jihad* was directed at eliminating a particular set of opponents of Islam, rather than at establishing an Islamic state.\(^{27}\)

If anything, the Indonesian killings have been treated as if they fall into an anomalous category of 'accidental' mass death. Commonly it is death from starvation and disease which is treated in this manner, as in the Ukraine in the 1920s, in Bengal in 1943, in China during the Japanese occupation and again during Great Leap Forward and even in Indonesian-occupied East Timor. In all these cases, neglectful, sometimes deliberately neglectful, government policies resulted in the deaths of large numbers of people under circumstances which allowed the governments concerned to claim that mass death was not their intention but was a consequence of circumstances beyond their control.\(^{28}\) The killings in Germany and occupied Europe were unambiguously the work of representatives of the state and, although some scholars have debated whether responsibility for these actions went right to the top of the Nazi state apparatus, the state as an institution clearly stands guilty. In the Indonesian case, on the other hand, the government was at least in some cases simply a bystander in the killings. This seems to put the massacres in part into the class of communal violence of the kind that accompanied the partition of India in 1947 or the expulsion of the Greeks from Asia Minor in 1922.\(^{29}\)


\(^{28}\) The literature on each of these cases is substantial and involves subtle argumentation on either side. By way of example, see George C. Hildebrand and Gareth Porter, *Cambodia: starvation and revolution* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), which argues that Khmer Rouge population policies were a consequence, not a cause, of massive food shortages in Cambodia.

\(^{29}\) The theoretical literature on mass killings is dominated by cases of inter-ethnic massacre, or genocide: Armenians in Turkey, Ukrainians in the Soviet Union, Jews and Gypsies in German-occupied Europe, Haru in Burundi, Tibetans in the People's Republic of China and so on, and tends to disregard more narrowly political killings such as those in Indonesia. The difficulty, however, with extending to concept of genocide to other forms of mass violence is the absence of theoretical grounds for distinguishing mass political killings such as those see Leo Kuper, *Genocide: its political use in the twentieth century* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981); Israel W. Charny, *How can we commit the unthinkable? genocide: the human cancer* (Boulder Col.: Westview, 1982); Irving Louis Horowitz, *Taking lives: genocide and state power* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1982); Israel W. Charny, ed., *Towards the understanding and prevention of genocide: proceedings of the International Conference on the Holocaust and genocide* (Boulder, Col.: Westview, 1984); Israel W. Charny, *Genocide: a critical bibliographical review* (London: Mansell, 1988); Ervin Staub, *The roots of evil: the origins of genocide and other group violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, *The history and sociology of genocide: analyses and case studies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990).


\(^{31}\) See, for instance, the way in which the issue is shrugged off in Pipit Rochijat, 'Am I PKI or non-PKI?', p. 45. One single exception is Usamah's short story, 'War and humanity', translated by Helen Jarvis, *Indonesia* 9 (1970), pp. 89-100 and also published in Aveling, *Genesa*, pp. 12-22.
who are said to have died at the hands of Pol Pot and his colleagues.\textsuperscript{32} Nor has there been much tendentiousness in the discussion of how many perished; even government representatives, although highly wary of detail, are generally not embarrassed by broad suggestions that a million may have died. This contrasts with attempts by Nazi and Khmer Rouge apologists to minimize the number of killings carried out by those regimes, and by the parallel attempts of their opponents to inflate the numbers.

Yet the fact that we habitually assess massacres by the total number of casualties, and by the percentage of victims from amongst the total population, encourages us to disregard the speed with which the Indonesian killings took place. Hitler’s extermination of the Jews was a massive and costly operation, taking many years and requiring the construction of camps, the requisition of strategically vital railway rolling stock and the extensive use of troops and other staff. Even Pol Pot took four years and a good deal of organization to accomplish his destructive work in Cambodia. The Indonesian killings, by contrast, were largely over within a few months and were carried out with a minimum of organization and technical infrastructure.\textsuperscript{33} We may routinely refer to both the scale and the intensity of mass killings, but intensity is a difficult notion to define and there is something especially distasteful about applying statistical analysis to the rate of killing during an atrocity. Even if the Indonesian killings stand out from the global experience because of the relatively short space of time they took to be completed, they are unlikely draw special attention on that account.

History as a discipline is poorly equipped to deal with massacres. While history’s attention to empirical detail perhaps equips it well to discover

\textsuperscript{32} As with Indonesia, the exact number of deaths is uncertain. Michael Vickery, who has examined the available figures with greatest care has concluded that probably around 740,000 more Cambodians than normal died during the Khmer Rouge years, out of a 1975 population of about 7.1 million. Of this 740,000, approximately half were executed, the rest dying mainly of disease and starvation. See Michael Vickery’s letter to the editors of the Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars 20 no. 1 (1988), pp. 70-73. Region-by-region, though, the contrast may not be so strong: the killing in Bali, for instance, reached levels not dissimilar to those in parts of Cambodia. See Ben Kiernan, ‘Wild chickens, farm chickens and corn chickens: Kampuchea’s Eastern Zone under Pol Pot’, in David P. Chandler and Ben Kiernan, eds., Revolution and its aftermath in Kampuchea: eight essays (New Haven: Yale University, 1983), p. 142.

\textsuperscript{33} I am grateful to Ruth McVey for this point.

the ‘facts’ of massacre, the dominant trend in modern historiography is to analyze structural change in time, an approach which discounts the significance of individual events such as massacres. Sukarno displayed a true historian’s consciousness (and political insensitivity) when he described the killing of the generals on 30 September/1 October 1965 as a ‘ripple in the ocean of the Revolution’.\textsuperscript{34} Massacres, moreover, create a literal dead-end for many of the protagonists. Whig historians, as Butterfield has pointed out, prefer winners, or at least survivors. They like continuity; change, when it comes, is preferred in long inexorable movements, not sudden hiatus. One of the distinguishing characteristics of historiography is its ability to set its subjects in the context of their pasts and their futures. Subjects whose future has been curtailed are less attractive. The abrupt departure of the PKI from the Indonesian political scene makes it now a difficult topic for discussion unless one can trace, as David Hill has done, the re-emergence of a leftist literature, or can believe, in line with public pronouncements of the Indonesian Minister of Defence Benny Murdani, in the existence of an active underground party.\textsuperscript{35}

A comparison of the historiography of Australia and South Africa suggests that history is generally kinder to killers than to enslavers. However brutal or extensive a massacre, it is an act which retreats steadily into the past; there is a kind of historical statute of limitations beyond which it seems to make little sense to pursue the guilt of mass murderers. Enslavement on the other hand is constantly present; contemporary criticism of the Indonesian government, which focuses on current conditions rather than past crimes, reflects this sense of historical priorities.

\textsuperscript{34} Quoted in J.D. Legge, Sukarno: a political biography (New York: Praeger, 1972), p. 398.

The meekness with which PKI members are often believed to have gone to the slaughter also hampers the serious historiographical treatment of their fate. Perhaps the strongest image we have of the massacre is of PKI members on Bali lining up, dressed in their white funeral clothes, to be executed methodically. A deep historiographical problem arises here from the fact that history commonly focuses on those who accomplish change or who at least seek it. Massacres, however, are catastrophes visited upon a group of people, and so the historical dynamic must inevitably appear to be external to the victims. Lack of will, for whatever reason, change or who at least seek it. Massacres, the hour of death is curiously culpable, a sign of weakness and it is for many historians an abdication from being historical agents at all. ‘Death in the fury of battle is [considered] glorious, but meekness in the moment of death is curiously culpable, a sign of weakness, and it compromises in the eyes of history.’ A strong philosophical rebuttal of this position can be made, by arguing that precisely in facing death with serenity, in accepting it as a consequence of one’s principles, victims retain their humanity up to the moment of death, but it helps to be able to believe that the principle and the cause will survive after the deaths.

Problems of interpretation

Aside from the problems of information and philosophy, the central difficulty for historians of Indonesia in attempting understand the massacres has been the problem of reconciling their national and local dimensions. The killings were precipitated by a national event, the attempted coup in Jakarta and they involved avowedly national actors - the army, the PKI, organized Islam - and yet the relatively scanty information we possess suggests that a host of local factors in each region determined the scope and scale of each bout of killing.

Some national dimensions of the killings have been thoroughly discussed in the existing literature. The works of Crouch, McVey and Sundhaussen have shown convicingly the origins and development of political rivalry between the Indonesian army high command and the PKI. Each saw the other as fundamentally antagonistic to its own sectional interests as well as to the national interest and each desired as far as possible to remove the other from political influence. When the opportunity arose, anticommunist army units, especially KOSTRAD and the RPKAD, moved swiftly to destroy the PKI, both by direct killing and by encouraging, arming and training civilian vigilantes who were then sent out to do the job. In most cases, the killings did not begin until elite military units had arrived in a locality and had sanctioned violence by instruction or example. A significant number of those killed had already been detained by the authorities and were either killed in jail or handed over to vigilantes for killing. At the same time, rural tension was sharpened by disputes over land, with the PKI promoting land reform by means of aksi sepithak, or unilateral actions, in the face of deeply entrenched opposition from

---

36 Hughes, Indonesian upheaval, p. 181, also p. 160. For other reports of meekness, see Gavi, Konterrevolution in Indonesien, pp. 13, 32. Outside Indonesia one of the most striking, though little known, instances of meekness was the passivity with which the Hutu of Burundi faced massacre by the Tutsi in 1972. See Chalk and Jonassohn, History and sociology of genocide, pp. 388-389.

37 In a Gestapu example, Sal Tas attempts to argue that the PKI brought its destruction on its own head, but he expresses it as an issue of moral rather than historical responsibility. See Sal Tas, Indonesia: the underdeveloped freedom (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1974), pp. 319-321.

38 Philipp Fehl, 'Mass murder, or humanity in death', Theology Today 28 no. 1 (April 1971), p. 64.

39 Ibid., pp. 69-71.
landlords. These factors alone help explain some of the violence which followed the coup, but they do not satisfactorily explain massacres.

Although the elimination of the PKI was necessary for the establishment of army rule, the scale of the violence of 1965-66 seems gratuitous when compared with the nature of the political change which it ushered in. When one considers that the massacre of St Bartholomew, to which historians have given a pivotal position in the rise of absolutism in France and the development of the Counter Reformation, achieved its notoriety with a death toll of no more than two thousand, out of an admittedly much smaller population in sixteenth century Paris, the violence of 1965-66 seems incomprehensibly excessive. In 1966, it is true, the change in style and policy brought about by Suharto's accession to power seemed to make the coup and the massacres a major watershed in modern Indonesian history. Since that time, however, the scholarly consensus has been retreating steadily from this position. Crouch in particular has drawn attention to the continuity of army power and of political structures between the Old and New Orders, which suggests that the transformation was more superficial than was first thought. Even those who have persisted in seeing the Old Order as holding dramatic possibilities now closed off by the New have tended to accept a continuity in state power from the Dutch colonial era up to the present. If the destruction of the PKI and the removal of leftist influence from the levers of power were the sole aim of the army, then it is hard to see that the rise to power of Suharto or the success of his

---


This combination of sharp social tension and official complicity is reminiscent of the White Terror in France in 1794-1795. During this extended series of massacres, the authorities commonly allowed crowds to seize and slaughter imprisoned Jacobins and proved most reluctant to prosecute killers, even when their identities were known. Other features in common with the Indonesian killings were a disregard for legal process, wide variation in the extent of the killings from region to region, the prominence of secret gangs and rural criminals, the use of death lists and the broad targeting of all who had been prominent on the left, regardless of their personal role in the defeated order, and the frequent killing of whole families. See Jacques Godechot, The counter-revolution: doctrine and action 1789-1804 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 246-254; and Richard Cobb, Reactions to the French revolution (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

42 Soman, The massacre of St. Bartholomew, p. viii. This figure refers to the killings in Paris alone; subsequent massacres in other French cities claimed more lives.

---

subsequent policies would have been any more imperilled had the death toll in 1965-66 been 10,000 or even 1000. Similar qualifications apply to the effects of the land reform campaign. Although the aksi sepahak generated great bitterness and considerable violence, they are widely acknowledged to have been a failure for the PKI. The occasions on which land redistribution could be carried out were far outnumbered by those on which determined and violent resistance by landlords and their associates not only prevented re-distribution but rolled back PKI influence in the villages. Although there were scores to be settled and lessons to be reinforced in 1965, the land reform issue alone hardly explains the ferocity of the killings.

On initial inspection, that ferocity seems to have been a product of local factors. To appreciate this, we need to look briefly at each region in turn. As Ken Young stresses, no central set of events encapsulates the massacres as a whole; the killings were scattered in time and space and whatever we know about one massacre only dimly illuminates the others. Only in some regions is it even possible to paint a broad picture of events. In strongly Muslim Aceh, where the PKI's support was minuscule and largely confined to the towns, cadres and their families are reported to have been eliminated swiftly in early October. We know little more, but the fact that Aceh's history contains a number of instances of the rapid and ruthless elimination of political opponents when the opportunity presented itself makes this brief account plausible. Immediately to the south, the plantation area of East Sumatra had been an area of endemic social conflict and labour unrest since the 1940s and the PKI was influential through its affiliated plantation workers' union SARBUPRI. Labour tension was exacerbated by hostility between Malays, Batak and Javanese. Extensive killings certainly took place, though it is not clear what share in the killings was taken by the army under local divisional commander Kemal Idris and anti-communist youth groups with army backing. Just how many people were killed and who, precisely, they were also remains unknown. Stoler, who has studied the political economy of the plantation region most closely, was able to do no more than note that the total estate workforce of 283,000
just before the coup had been reduced by 16% - 47,000 people - a year later\textsuperscript{6}, but this figure does not take into account those who fled or were dismissed, nor family members of workers who may have been killed along with them, nor additional workers recruited after October 1965. In the southern Sumatra province of Lampung, there was a good deal of killing near the town of Metro. Here the victims seem to have been Javanese transmigrant settlers, while their killers were local Muslims, resentful of Javanese intrusion into the area.\textsuperscript{46}

Paul Webb's valuable report\textsuperscript{47} on the killings in Nusatenggara is a model for the kind of report we need on those many areas which were not acknowledged PKI strongholds. His account draws out a multitude of local factors in the killings, local particularities of the kind emphasized by Ken Young. Especially important here was the strength of Christianity and of traditional religions. The ambiguous, or at least less uncompromising, relationship between Christianity and Communism which is hinted at in the Purwodadi Affair, appears also in Nusatenggara. In Timor, sections of the Protestant church aligned themselves with poor peasants on the land reform issue, and Protestant clergy, staff of the local university and teachers in general were an early target, many killed by local vigilante groups. The Catholic church in Flores, though generally not at all associated with the PKI, forbade its followers from participating in the killings, and in doing so directly countermanded an order by the local military commander for mass action against the communists.\textsuperscript{48} In Solor, parts of Timor and elsewhere, communism became entwined with local cargo cults, such as the Timorese malak movement and though the cult followers had minimal understanding of PKI ideology they were caught up in the security sweep along with their erstwhile associates. Some unfortunate followers of traditional religions simply told army investigators that they belonged to none of the 'official' religions; they were then assumed to be communists and were dealt with accordingly. In Lombok, local memories report 50,000 killings in early 1966. Here the killers seem to have been carried out predominantly by Muslim Sumbaks, with the majority of victims Balinese - traditionally the ruling elite in the western part of the island - and Chinese, who controlled the commercial sector.

More killing took place in West Kalimantan, although there the worst massacres were in October and November 1967, well after the massacres had peaked in more other regions. The victims were almost exclusively Chinese, the killers predominantly indigenous Dayaks. Before the coup, West Kalimantan had been one of the bases for Indonesian operations against Malaysia, which included sponsorship of ethnic Chinese guerrilla forces across the border in Sarawak. When Indonesian politics turned abruptly to the right after 1965, and especially after the recognition of Malaysia in August 1966, some of these guerrillas began operations on the Indonesian side of the border, finding support amongst the large and predominantly rural Chinese community. Coppel, the only scholar to examine these killings closely, links them both to Chinese guerrilla attacks on Dayak villages and to a deliberate 'psychological warfare' campaign by the Indonesian army to incite the Dayaks against the Chinese.\textsuperscript{49}

Of killings in the rest of Sumatra and Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Maluku, we know virtually nothing.\textsuperscript{50} It is probable that the killings in these areas were on a much lesser scale, if only because fewer communists were available to be killed. Scholars studying perennially violent Madura off the northeast coast of Java report that the left had been largely eliminated well before 1965 and that the island was consequently quiet during the killings.\textsuperscript{51} The 1955 general elections which definitively marked the rise of the PKI on Java gave it only meagre representation in other provinces, except North

\textsuperscript{45} Ann Laura Stoler, Capitalism and confrontation in Sumatra's plantation belt, 1870-1979 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 163-164. See also Gavi, Konterrevolusi in Indonesia, pp. 38-39; King, 'The great purge in Indonesia', p. 90.

\textsuperscript{46} Frank Palmos, personal communication.

\textsuperscript{47} Webb, 'The sickle and the cross'. A slightly different version of this article appears in R.A.F. Paul Webb, Palms and the cross: socio-economic development in Nusatenggara (Townsville: James Cook University of North Queensland, 1986), pp. 149-161.

\textsuperscript{48} See also Gavi, Konterrevolusi in Indonesia, p. 33.


\textsuperscript{51} Contenay, 'Another bloodbath?', p. 358, on the other hand, identifies Madura as a place of especially unrestrained killing.
and South Sumatra, and in South Sumatra the army had been arresting PKI members since late 1956. After the declaration of martial law in 1957 and with much of the archipelago under direct army rule, expressing allegiance to the PKI had been dangerous well before 1965.

On Java, a number of relatively spectacular anti-communist riots took place in the cities, especially against the PKI headquarters in Jakarta and against the communist mayors of Cirebon, Magelang, Solo, Salatiga and Surabaya. In Surabaya, whose corpse-clogged canals were widely reported in the Western media, Muslim Madurese apparently carried out most of the killings. By far the worst massacres, however, took place in the countryside. The main killers were army units, especially the paracommando unit RPKAD, and civilian vigilantes, most commonly drawn from youth groups associated with anti-communist political parties. Of these the Muslim youth group Ansor, affiliated with the Nahdatul Ulama, is reported to have played the greatest role. West Java was relatively untouched by mass violence, mainly because the local Siliwangi Division, having spent fourteen years from 1948 to 1962 attempting to crush the fundamentalist Muslim Darul Islam movement in the West Javanese countryside, was most reluctant to encourage Muslim youth groups to take political matters into their own hands.

The main exception in West Java appears to have been the Indramayu area between Subang and Cirebon, an area of endemic poverty where the PKI had been relatively strong. The focus of tension in Indramayu was the occupation of government teak forests by squatters, who had resisted violently when police tried to remove them, leaving one policeman dead. The killings in 1965 were then carried out by vengeful members of the police force.

In Central and East Java, the main killing grounds, there were clear differences in the scope of the massacres from region to region. In Central Java, killing was heaviest in the Solo-Klaten area, in Pati to the north and in Banyumas, at the western end of the province; here the army’s paracommando unit RPKAD commanded by Sarwo Edhie presided over most

of the killings. In East Java, the Kediri region (discussed by Ken Young), Probolinggo/Pasuruan, Situbondo and Banyuwangi appear to have been the worst areas. Throughout Central and East Java, the ferocity of the killings seems to have been associated particularly with ancient hostility between cultural-religious groups, the so-called abangan, Muslim Javanese whose religion is heavily influenced by pre-Islamic beliefs, and the santri, who are more orthodox and more avowedly Muslim. In Bali, discussed in the concluding section of this volume, killing was concentrated in the three western kabupaten of Jembrana, Buleleng and Tabanan, and seems to have been associated both with the defence of Hinduism and with longstanding rivalries between patronage groups. Both army units and PNI vigilantes called Tamins took part in the killings. In all these cases, the killings peaked at some stage between early November 1965 and late January 1966, though they continued at a reduced level for a good deal longer and localized outbreaks of more numerous killings took place for another three years. The Purwodadi killings described by Iskandar and Lasut are one such incident.

In this volume we can only begin to outline the probable connections between local factors and the national scale of the killings. It is clear to begin with that between national and local factors in the killings there was at very least a multiplier effect. Ken Young shows in the case of Kediri how the coincidence of national and local motives for killing in the unusual absence of restraining forces, unleashed deep antagonisms in a fury of murder. The failure of national politics to provide workable and working institutions to fulfill the promises of independence threw the Indonesian people back on loyalty to older social divisions which became polarized around Islam and Communism. Old antagonisms which might once have been mitigated by a shared national loyalty deepened instead into bitter

---

52 See Hughes, Indonesian upheaval, p. 157; Crouch, Army and politics, p. 142; Sundhussen, The road to power, p. 217. One report mentions Garut as the site of major killings; see Einar Schiberras and Batjo Daeng Bintang, Indonesien: Analyse eines Massakers (Frankfurt: März Archiv, 1970), p. 177.

53 The best available reports of Banyumas are those of Frank Palmos, most easily accessible at ‘And how they died’, The Economist 20 August 1966, p. 728. See also Palmos, ‘Massacre toll in Indonesia’. Accounts of the killings in Central Java can also be found in Clavi, Konterrevolution in Indonesien, pp. 11-14 and 31-35.

saw it as no more than another innovative manoeuvre in the Jakarta of Untung's coup group and in ten as a strictly game. Just how the Indonesian public viewed the initial experimentation with new forms. Guided Democracy attempted to at its height, hot war was escalating in Vietnam, China had begun to insisting on an ideological orthodoxy defined by Sukarno. Democracy made political judgement to cloak political actions in the ideological terminology of the day. The PKI, the army and the rest of the players in Indonesian politics all operated competently within this somewhat ritualistic framework. For the mass of the Indonesian people, however, the absence of conventions of political behaviour and the habit of paying lip service to the ideology of Guided Democracy made political judgement difficult at a time when unprecedented economic decay and naked political rivalry made such judgement imperative. Indonesians scurrying the political horizon for signs of the future or of the real political agendas of the major contenders did so in vain. The Indonesian public, therefore, was ready for an event which would, as it were, shew the political players in their true colours.

When the coup of 30 September 1965 took place, its organizers probably saw it as no more than another innovative manoeuvre in the Jakarta political game. Just how the Indonesian publicviewed the initial pronouncements of Untung's coup group is not clear, but within a few days message from army public relations units was clear: the events of 30 September had been a PKI-planned attempt to seize power and to overthrow the delicate balance of national politics. The coup itself was presented as definitive evidence that the PKI had at last gone too far, but this message was rammed home by careful exploitation of the alleged circumstances of the coup. Indonesian politics had been virtually free of assassinations since the revolution, and little effort was needed to portray the killing of the generals as a transgression even of the tolerant standards of Guided Democracy. In this was added a carefully orchestrated campaign of disinformation about events at Halim airforce base on the night of the coup portraying the party, which had previously enjoyed an enviable reputation for chastity and incorruptibility, as a hotbed of immorality. After the arrival of the captured generals at Halim, it was widely rumoured, members of the left wing women's organization GERWANI stripped and performed a lascivious 'dance of the Fragrant Flowers' before an audience of PKI cadres and airforce officers, culminating in the ritual mutilation of the generals, living and dead. The frenzied women allegedly gouged out the eyes of their victims, cut off their genitals and, after dumping the remains down a nearby well, abandoned themselves to an orgy with the watching officers and cadres, Aidit himself awarding medals to the most depraved. Official autopsies on the bodies of the generals, now published, have shown these stories to be fabrications. The killings were not an outraged response to these specific 'events'; rather, in the highly charged atmosphere of the time these 'revelations' were sufficient to make the party in general appear to be a demonic force whose destruction would be a service to the nation. People were willing to believe these stories not because they particularly fitted with what was previously known about the PKI but because the crisis of the age demanded a culprit. Once the PKI was identified as the guilty party, no manoeuvring could save it.

---

55 Just how innovative a move it was depends on whether one sees the events in question as a strictly limited attempt to eliminate certain senior generals or as bolder grab for power. This is not, however, the place to consider the competing theories concerning the identity and intentions of the coup planners. Crouch, *Army and politics*, assesses a range of views.
This argument helps to explain the frequency with which non-communists described the killings as a kind of cleansing. It seems not improbable that the killers allowed their depredations to become all the more cataclysmic by comparing them to the Bharatayuddha, the final destructive battle of the Mahabharata epic, which is the basis of Java's wayang kulit or shadow puppet tradition. Another scholar has suggested intriguingly, though without much elaboration, that the disfigurement of victims may have been caused by a desire to make them formally imperfect and thus to disqualify them from harmony with the universe and thus from obtaining cosmological power. Perhaps related is a story recently recounted by John Gittings that the killers on Bali put whitewash into their victims' eyes so that 'the eyes would not take their picture to the other world'. Those accounts which deal with a significant number of specific killings - 'By the Banks of the Brantas' and the account translated in this volume as 'Additional Data on Counter-Revolutionary Cruelty' - however, present a more complex picture of gratuitous, rather than systematic, cruelty compounded by inexpert techniques and a desire to make the bodies unrecognizable. The best known case of mutilation is that of the PKI leader on Bali, I Gde Puger, a corpulent man widely believed to have profited commercially from his close association with the Balinese governor Suteja. Puger's punishment - to have the fat cut from his body before he was shot in the head - was a matter of political rather than spiritual symbolism.

60 The fact that the killers frequently acted under the banner of Islam is no barrier to their having thought in terms of wayang stories. Resink cites no less an Islamic authority than SM Kartouwoiyoh, leader of the Darul Islam rebellion of 1948-1963, who wrote to Sukarno in 1951 prophesying a Bharatayuddha. See Resink, 'From the old Mahabharata to the new Ramayana-Order', p. 214; Howard Palfrey Jones, Indonesia: the possible dream (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), pp. 386-387.


63 Sutton, 'Indonesia's night of terror', p. 27. See also Moser, 'Where the rivers ran crimson from butcher', p. 26, for other incidents. It is hard to know, of course, whether actions such as the beheading of victims were undertaken simply as a means of execution, as a precaution to hamper the identification of bodies or for reasons of superstition. See, for instance, 'By the banks of the Brantas', p. 89.

It also seems likely that the killings drew on traditions of violence in Indonesian society which are normally restrained or restricted by the forces of law and order. In other words, whatever social disharmony may have provoked the killings, once those on the left were marked out as victims, the violence against them had a self-intensifying quality. A problem here is that the distracting paradigm of the peaceful Javanese, which is often inflated to become that of the peaceful Indonesian, still hovers over much writing on Indonesia. This paradigm, created in colonial times and sustained by popular reading of works such as Anderson's persuasive Mythology and the tolerance of the Javanese, sits so uncomfortably with the massacres that it has inclined us to treat the massacres as an aberrant phenomenon, the exceptional product of unpredictable and, one hopes, unrepeatable circumstances and therefore having little to tell us about the true character of Indonesian society. Anderson's main argument, however, was to propose that wayang mythology gave Javanese a multitude of social role models and made no suggestion that tolerance implied peaceableness. Indeed, as suggested above, the wayang tradition itself contains a strong element of cataclysmic violence. There is, moreover, a host of circumstantial evidence, from the reputed violent traditions of Madurese, Buginese and Makassarese to the gory front page stories of the Jakarta popular daily Pos Kora which imply a more violent Indonesia than the stereotype. Suggesting that Indonesian society is more violent than we first thought, however, is a good deal easier than suggesting a specific social location for that violence.

There are a few areas which we might fruitfully explore. One is the place of men of violence in traditional Indonesian societies. It is becoming clear that semi-criminal practitioners of violence have a long and deeply-rooted history in Indonesian societies. They are by no means always marginal figures, outlaws who simply plunder and rob where they can, but often have close and complex relationships both with the power-holders in society and with the oppressed. One of the characteristics of these underworld figures has been a delight in gratuitous violence; at times such
as the arrival of the Japanese forces in 1942 or their departure in 1945, there were people who killed wildly, confident that the chaos would permit no retribution for their crimes. We find the same exultation in murder in Maskun Iskandar's Furwodadi 'James Bond' who was 'licensed to kill'.

Gadjah Mada University's report on Klaten describes the PKI as working both with and against local gangsters and it would be fascinating to know whether and to what extent the violence of 1965-66 simply tapped the violent potentials of gangsters on the other side. The Ansor and Tamin gangs which were responsible for much killing in East Java and Bali respectively bear some resemblance to the evanescent gangs which emerged around politically conscious bandit leaders during the Indonesian national revolution. Anecdotal evidence, including Bu Yeit's account in this volume, suggests that a desire to seize property may have been a motive for at least some of the violence; this was also the case in France's White Terror.

We are now accumulating a useful range of studies which deal directly or tangentially with this social group and during the next decade we may be in a position to speak more generally about their contribution to the violence of 1965-66.

The style of the 1965-66 killings also bears some resemblance to the pernuda (youth) violence of the early revolution in 1945, when young nationalists in collaboration with local underworld figures, launched a campaign of terror against the Dutch who were attempting to return to power on Java after World War II. As in 1965-66, this violence was partly aimed at attrition of the enemy, but it aimed mainly to create an atmosphere of horrifying menace which would cripple the adversaries' sense of purpose.

A second dimension to explore is the extent to which the alleged harmony of the traditional Indonesian village is based on social sanctions which could be enforced if necessary by communal violence. The collective murder of thieves by villages is reported even today, and the West, from lynching mobs to the recent retributions after the Romanian revolution, has plenty of examples of its own. Violence of this kind may not represent a direct breaking down of the social order so much as a reaffirmation of community standards in the eyes of villagers.

Another suggestion has been that the killings were a kind of collective running amok (mengamuk). This idea, popular just after the killings, does not match up to what we now know of amok as a psychological phenomenon. Amok has two classical forms, individual and collective. In the individual form, a person facing ruin, shame or social humiliation suddenly breaks into indiscriminate, murderous violence which only ceases when he (the amokker is invariably male) is killed by appalled bystanders or by the forces of law and order. Collective amok is more calculated and resembles the Viking berserk: typically a group of soldiers adopts violent frenzy against opposing troops as a military tactic in the face of defeat or overwhelming odds. Both forms of amok involve the redemption of honour by frenzied violence resulting in the death of the amokker. There is little in the character of the 1965-66 killings which matches this description; with their death lists and clandestine killing grounds, and with

---


clearly no suicidal motive, the killers have little in common with the typical amokker. Indeed, one would be more inclined to expect amok under these circumstances on the part of the communists, though there is no evidence of this.70

Even this, however, fails to explain the meekness, mentioned above, with which many victims seem to have gone to their deaths. Just how meek party members were is, like so much else, a matter of dispute, and it may well be that isolated incidents of striking passivity have been taken wrongly as the norm. Several studies here strongly qualify this image of meekness. We have not only the official view that the PKI was planning a campaign of armed rebellion to follow up the coup of 30 September in Jakarta, but a variety of anecdotes discussing PKI resistance.71 Newspaper accounts of the period give a somewhat similar picture, with repeated reports of armed PKI movements in the countryside, though it is doubtful whether these can be trusted as factual. Against this must be placed the reported casualty figures for the RPKAD paracommandos in their extensive operations in Central Java and Bali: a total of two.72

The eventual complete failure of PKI resistance has led us perhaps to underplay its extent in the first months after the coup, but even if we add together all the scattered cases of resistance to the better known operations in Blitar and West Kalimantan, we still do not come up with anything approaching a period of civil war.

Some scholars have extended the wayang theme by explaining the reported passivity of party members in the face of destruction by suggesting that the PKI's place on the political left put it also on the symbolic left; in the wayang kultus shadow puppet play, the left hand side of the screen is occupied by the Kurawa, who are allegedly morally wrong and destined to lose, salah dan kalah, in the drawn-out struggle with their Pandawa cousins. As good Javanese, so the argument goes, the communists merely submitted to the fate marked out for them since the beginning of time.73 Although the PKI certainly used wayang metaphor to understand its place in the world far more than one would expect of a Marxist party74, any argument along these lines needs to take account of the far more subtle notions of good and bad, and left and right, in the wayang, whose message stresses duty in the face of moral ambiguity, rather than clear-cut moral polarities.75 In the absence of detailed accounts of the killings we are never likely to find out.

The problem of PKI passivity is complicated by its relationship to the question of guilt. Some observers have argued that passivity implied acknowledgment of guilt, and have suggested that meekness in the face of destruction was the party's admission that it had erred. The party, of course, was neatly pinned in a no-win situation by this kind of argument: if it did not fight, it acknowledged its guilt, if it did fight, then its guilt was proven. Passivity is so frequently reported in stories of the Indonesian massacres that it probably was indeed the typical response of victims, but the most plausible explanation is that the victims were paralysed by that combination of uncertainty and vague hope which makes acquiescence right until the very last moment always seem wiser than resistance.

Questions of guilt, in fact, were much more of an issue for the killers. Wholesale killing required justification, hence the eagerness with which people accepted stories of death lists, holes dug by PKI members for the bodies of their intended victims and the whole panoply of PKI demonic activities, in which simple tools such as rubber tapping implements could become cunningly disguised eye-gougers. Hence, too, the emphasis on documentary proof of involvement in the coup in the army's 'Crushing the G30S/PKI in Central Java'. Part of the motive for the killings, however,

70 Gavi, Konsurrevolution in Indonesia, p. 41, uses the term amok to describe and explain the apparent suicidal submission of the left, but without accompanying violence it is hard to accept this categorization. Topping, 'Slaughter of Reds', p. 16, is one of the few to report cases of suicide by PKI members. p214Y


72 Gavi, Konsurrevolution in Indonesia, p. 35. Another report states that fifteen members of the Muslim youth group Ansor died in clashes in Kediri. See Topping, 'Slaughter of Reds gives Indonesia a grim legacy', p. 16.

73 Legge, Sukarno, pp. 398-399 and Resink, 'From the Old Mahabharata-to the New Hansana-Order'. p. 220.

74 See Ruth T. McVey, 'The wayang controversy in Indonesian communism', in Mark Hix and Robert H. Taylor, eds, Conflict, meaning and power in Southeast Asia (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1986), pp. 21-51. As McVey points out, moreover, the PKI Politburo identified itself overtly with the Pandawa, not the Kurawa.

75 Anderson, Mythology and the tolerance of the Javanese, pp. 4-27.
was also to create guilt. Although Indonesian politics under Guided Democracy had been polarized between the PKI and its opponents, political uncertainty and the discontinuities between rhetoric and reality had led many people to equivocate, to avoid doing anything to cut their links irrevocably with either side. This was good political sense: Indonesian politics is unforgiving; those who choose the wrong side are seldom permitted to return, and each major showdown in Indonesian politics - the Madiun Affair, Dutch-sponsored federalism, the PRRI-Permesta revolt - had seen capable and patriotic individuals, great and small, excluded from the nation's political life. In 1965, the army was determined to force another such parting of the ways, not only to remove its rivals but to force commitment on the uncommitted. Although confident within days that the Gestapu coup itself had been crushed, General Suharto and those close to him remained deeply uncertain about which people in the armed forces and bureaucracy could be relied upon. Encouraging as wide as possible participation in the massacres was a way of creating complicity, a way of committing fence-sitters to the victory of the anti-communist forces. The more hands which were bloodied by the suppression of communism, the more hands which could be depended upon to stand firm against any future PKI resurgence and depended upon not to turn a point in accusation against those who sponsored the massacres. The killing which took place within families seems to have had the deliberate intention of placing blood-guilt on those otherwise most likely to seek revenge.  

As Michael van Langenberg points out, too, the extent of the killings soon became an element in the army's case for a drastic restructuring of the Indonesian political order. Suharto and those close to him realized very soon after the coup that an opportunity had arisen not simply to eliminate the PKI and to seize power but to restructure Indonesian politics so that a political order such as Guided Democracy need never emerge again. The exact nature of the army's new order was not determined until later - indeed it is still being adjusted - but a compelling case for a clear and definitive break with the past was required. The killings served this army purpose by placing clearly on the historical record just what a disaster it was for Indonesia to dabble in liberal democracy and leftist politics. Constructing a memory to uphold a New Order, thus, was an important army motive.

36 Sutton, 'Indonesia's night of terror', p. 27; Moser, 'Where the rivers ran crimson from butchery', p. 28.
Consequences of the massacres

What is the place of the massacres in contemporary Indonesian politics? Did the efficacy of the killings, for instance, help to establish violence both remembered and continuing - as an effective tool of policy under the New Order? Although a literature on structural violence in Indonesia does exist, and is summed up by such titles as Ten Years' Military Terror and Indonesia: Law, Propaganda and Terror, much political analysis of modern Indonesia downplays the structural role of violence, arguing that the majority of brutal incidents are gratuitous and politically unnecessary. In this respect, however, the so-called petrus killings (from penembakan misterius, mysterious shootings) of 1983 and after may have exercised a profound academic influence. These killings were, initially at least, a response to sharply rising criminality in the cities of Java. They began in Yogyakarta in early 1983 and spread from there to most regions of the archipelago. The victims, on the whole, were known criminals or former criminals whose names appeared on an official black list and who were hunted down by murder squads clearly composed of military personnel. The campaign later extended to the carefully staged shooting of escaped prisoners. Estimates of the number of victims in this campaign vary substantially, but it seems likely that several thousand were killed. Systematic terror of this kind seemed at first to be a new phenomenon in Indonesian history, but as scholars have probed the origins and style of the petrus killings more closely, some have come to link them with other cases of state violence, including the Gestapu killings. Much of the work in this direction, however, is still in preparation or has only just been published, and we cannot yet say just how it will influence the study of Indonesia in general.

Another reason, of course, why we study mass killings is for their psychological effect on the survivors. There is little doubt that most Jews feel themselves to be in some way or other survivors of the Holocaust.

---


78 For instance, Justus M. van der Kroef, 'Indonesia: prophylactic murder and the legacy of Gestapu', Solidarity, 5 no 99 (1984), pp. 16-22.
and Catholicism\textsuperscript{83), predominantly in Java, Timor and North Sumatra. Significant numbers on Java converted to Hinduism during the same period.\textsuperscript{84} The reasons for these conversions are complex. Since 1966 the New Order government has insisted that all Indonesians must believe in God and adhere to a religion, so that they cannot subscribe to atheism which is seen as linked to communism. Some conversions, therefore, were undoubtedly pro forma registrations. Since the Christian churches before 1965, moreover, were an object of suspicion because of the Western connections, their conversion figures may also have included something of a pre-coup backlog of unannounced conversion.

The scale of conversion, however, suggests that the political trauma of 1965 shook many people loose from their previously held values and world views, making them receptive to new messages and new spiritual solutions. Christianity was especially well-placed to benefit from this shaking loose because, unlike Islam, it had remained relatively aloof from the political confrontation before 1965 and from the killings themselves, although as Kenneth Orr and the Gadjah Mada team report Christians were involved in the killings in some regions. Far more than Islam, too, the Christian churches carried out energetic pastoral work amongst prisoners, their families and remnants of the Left in general. As Bu Yati’s reminiscences reveal, this work, disregarding the official ostracism of the Left, won Christianity much respect amongst groups who would previously have had little time for it.\textsuperscript{86} In the case of Hinduism, the appeal of a return to Java’s pre-Islamic beliefs as part of a search for stability was probably important; Hinduism also attracted those politically committed to resisting the expansion of Muslim political influence.

\textsuperscript{83} Following Dutch usage, Indonesian reserves the term Kristen (Dutch Christelijk) for Protestantism and has no generally accepted term for Christianity as a whole, hence the need for specifying both main branches of Christianity.

\textsuperscript{84} Avery T. Willis, Jr., Indonesian revival: why two million came to Christ (South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1977). See also Frank L. Cooley, Indonesia: church and society (New York: Friendship Press, 1968), pp. 6-7, 90.


\textsuperscript{86} See Willis, Indonesian revival, and Webb, 'The sickle and the cross'.

To judge the effects of survival on Indonesia, however, we need also to make sense of the figures. To begin with, many millions of people, that half or more of the population which was anti-communist\textsuperscript{87}, were never at any risk of being killed in 1965-66, at least not by those who were killing alleged communists. Just as a majority of the population in Western countries treated AIDS with equanimity when the disease appeared only to attack homosexuals and intravenous drug-users, the large number of Indonesians who were never threatened by the 1965-66 killings, and their descendants, may be psychologically unaffected by them now. The PKI claimed three million members, its affiliate the BTI around eight million, other mass organizations perhaps another twelve million.\textsuperscript{88} Did all these millions feel themselves to have been survivors when the wave of killings had finally abated? The answer is probably that they did not. First, of course, a figure of twenty-three million produced by adding these memberships is almost certainly an over-estimate. A great many party members were also members of affiliated organizations, and a figure of twenty-three million must include a good deal of double counting. Indonesian political parties, moreover, have always counted generously when assessing their own membership and the PKI never had any reason to downplay its public support. This is perhaps even more true of the BTI, whose dispersed rural constituency must have been harder to marshal. Although anyone with links to the left was at some risk, this risk was by no means evenly spread. Party leaders and senior cadres, together with leftist government officials and military officers, were at far greater risk than, say, peasants who happened to be members of the BTI. KOPKAMTIB’s own estimate - which is hardly likely to be conservative - was that there were around 300,000 PKI cadres in 1965, together with well under two million party members with a significant degree of training and involvement in party affairs.\textsuperscript{89} These people were the prime target of the killers and although thousands of others outside this category certainly perished as well, those who were not in the main target group must have felt themselves, correctly, less at risk.

\textsuperscript{87} I suggest this figure on the debatable basis that the PKI might have obtained close to a majority of the vote had free elections been held in Indonesia in 1964/65. Certainly, PKI support was never more than 50% nationwide.

\textsuperscript{88} See Willis, Indonesian revival, p. 161.
This fact that those conscious of being survivors of the massacres in Indonesia were a relatively small proportion of society as a whole, in contrast with Cambodia or the Jews of Central Europe, means that the role of survivors and their families in shaping Indonesian consciousness is likely to be far smaller than in Cambodia or Israel. Perhaps even more important, however, is the fate of those survivors. People in huge numbers were held but not killed after the Gestapu affair. Just how many these were is as uncertain as the number of deaths. In the 1970s, official figures for the total number ever detained ranged from 600,000 to 750,000. Amnesty International put the figure at 'about one million'. More recently, the Indonesian government has suggested that 1.5 to 1.7 million former prisoners are 'at large' in society, but it is hard to know whether this is part of an attempt to keep the issue of a 'communist threat' alive. Whatever the total, only a small number remain in jail, but many hundreds of thousands of people spent months or years behind barbed wire because of their alleged involvement in the 30 September Movement. Amongst these were a good number of pathetic victims, detained by accident or out of malice although they had absolutely no connection with the PKI. A large majority of those held, however, were 'guilty' in the New Order's flexible sense of the term, that is they were recognizable members of the broad left before 1965, the category that was in danger of being killed all over Indonesia in 1965-66. The conditions that these prisoners were held under have been well documented as have the various social disabilities imposed on former prisoners after their return to society. For such people, the burdens of imprisonment and discrimination probably form a much more important part of their consciousness than the relatively brief risk of being killed in the massacres of 1965-66. But Yeti's story, translated in this volume, supports this conclusion, her chief bitterness being against those who made her life hard drudgery after the coup.

Something different must apply to those who escaped death and detention by going underground. For such people, changing their names and appearance, calling clandestinely on circles of friends, often spending long periods as gelandangan (wandering, homeless people), risk more than suffering must have been the dominant feature of their lives after 1965. We catch a glimpse of life on the run in Ibu Marini's 'I am a leaf in the storm' and in Umar Kayam's short story 'Bawuk', but no more than a glimpse. We need many more such stories before we know what the fate of Ibu Marini and of so many other victims means for modern Indonesia.

---


51 Indonesia: an Amnesty International report (London: Amnesty International, 1977), pp. 23, 41-44. A significant but unknown number died while in detention, either formally executed or from deliberate maltreatment or neglect or from natural causes.

52 Government figures vary considerably. In 1981, officials gave a figure of 1,580,020 former prisoners, of whom 42,084 were said to be disqualified from voting in the coming election. This figure was repeated in 1985, with some suggestion that it might rise to 1.7 million. In 1990, the news magazine Tempo referred to 1.43 million former prisoners, while the Dutch journal Indonésie, Feiten en Meningen cited the army commander Try Sutrisno as saying that the total number was 1.8 million. See 'Korting hak pilih', Tempo 12 December 1981, p. 14; 'Pendataan ulang bekas tahanan G30S/PKI selesai akhir 1985', Kompas 8 June 1985, p. 1; 'Pemilu baru Pemilu', Tempo 17 February 1990, p. 24; 'Geen stemrecht voor ex-gevangenen', Indonésie, Feiten en Meningen 15 no. 3 (April 1990), p. 20.
Chapter 11

BALI

Editor's introduction.

To step beyond Java and investigate the killings of 1965-69 in Indonesia's Outer Islands is to take a deeper step into the unknown. The island of Bali, however, is a slightly different matter, for here the best known accounts report killings on a scale even greater than Java's. The most influential report is that of John Hughes, whose chapter 'Frenzy on Bali' outlines a story repeated by many later authorities.1 Bali was initially tense but calm, as people tried to sense where events in Jakarta were leading the country. There was a minor clash between rival parties in Buleleng in the north in November, but little else took place until early December, when an altercation between PKI villagers and local troops in Jembrana left one soldier dead.2 This incident, according to Hughes, sparked off a wave of killings, across the island. As on Java, the army played an important role in backing the killings initially, with RPKAD units distributing blacklists of PKI members for liquidation and training gangs of civilian youths, generally called Tamins, in the basic techniques of killing. The Balinese, however, exceeded their instructors, turning on PKI members and those associated with them with a chilling ferocity. Whole villages were destroyed, women and children as well as men, leaving the countryside pock-marked with the blackened shells of former settlements.3 The

---


2 The most detailed description of this event is M. Ikramegar "PKI lantarkan serangan "G-30-N" di Bali!! dan gagal", Minggu Pagi 18 no 42 (16 Jan. 1966), pp. 25-27. See also Crouch, Army and politics, p. 152.

3 See the brief account in Tjokorda Gede Agung Sukawati, Reminiscences of a Balinese prince (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, Southeast Asia Paper no 14, 1979), p. 79; and Gavi, Konflikrevolutiion in Indonesia, pp. 40-41.
Balinese PKI leader, I Gede Puger, was killed by being cut to pieces. Tales of over-filled graveyards and rivers clogged with corpses echo similar reports from Java. The story given perhaps widest coverage in the West was a chilling account of PKI members, calmly accepting their fate, who dressed in white funeral robes and walked peacefully with their executioners to the place of death. The RPKAD commander Sarwo Edhie, whose troops arrived in late December, is said to have remarked, 'In Java we had to egg the people on to kill Communists. In Bali we have to restrain them, make sure they don't go too far.'

Something of a scholarly consensus exists to explain the Balinese killings. In the first place, although the antagonism between Islam and communism which sharpened tensions on Java was clearly absent, a similar antipathy had emerged between upholders of Balinese Hinduism and members of the local PKI. Communists showed the same disrespect for established religious practice as they did on Java and aroused the same kind of hostile reaction, though it is a little ironic that in East Java the PKI was associated with Hinduism, while the Muslim vigilantes who broke up Hindu organizations in East Java and destroyed pre-Islamic sacred sites in South Sulawesi would have shared the PKI's iconoclastic attitude to Balinese Hinduism. Vickers describes the consternation caused when a group of PKI supporters attempted to desecrate the funeral ceremony of the Dewa Agung, or paramount traditional ruler of Bali, in Klungkung in 1965. Mobilization in the defence of religion was perhaps also combined with an urge to purify the island in a ritual sense. The Japanese occupation, the revolution and years of independence had all been times of trial for the whole society. A catastrophic eruption of Gunung Agung, the island's highest and most sacred mountain in 1963, had been widely seen as the consequence of meddling by Sukarno and other secular figures in the timing and structure of the ritual. Just as elsewhere in Indonesia people cast about in a secular search for culprits to be blamed for Indonesia's post-
independence malaise, so Balinese looked for the cause of spiritual disharmony so great it could move a mountain.

More prosaically, the picturesque countryside of Bali also had its share of class conflict. Semi-popular literature has made much of the supposedly egalitarian system of landholding in Bali, but the reality was more complicated. Dutch reorganization of the administrative structure in the early twentieth century followed by the Great Depression of the 1930s left a growing proportion of Balinese society without rights to land, and in the depressed economic circumstances of the 1930s and 1940s there was little scope for the development of alternative, off-farm employment. Especially in the east of the island, land increasingly came into the hands of the aristocratic and royal families, the Dewa Agung becoming the largest of the landowners. When economic growth resumed in the 1950s, moreover, with the resumption of trade and tourism, it was the aristocratic families, together with Chinese entrepreneurs, who took the lion's share of the new opportunities. After the 1960 Agrarian Law was passed, some official redistribution of land took place, but it was slow, incomplete and by all accounts inequitably handled. Resentment was exacerbated by an outbreak of famine in 1964 which highlighted disparities in wealth. From mid 1964, landless peasants increasingly found an advocate in the leaders of the Dewa Agung, the PKI and BULAR; there were *aksi sepihak* of the kind launched on Java. PKI leaders apparently also encouraged their supporters, as on Java, to move into forest areas and clear land for themselves. These issues are all mentioned in the first translation below, a brief account of social tensions in Bali in early 1965, taken from the same work as the reports on Klaten and Banyuwangi earlier in this volume.

---

7 The most important source for the political and social history of Bali since 1945 are the as yet unpublished writings of Geoffrey Robinson.


9 Rex Mortimer, *The Indonesian Communist Party and land reform 1959-1965* (Clayton, Vic.: Monash University Centre of Southeast Asian Studies), pp. 52-53; Hughes, *Indonesian upheaval*, pp. 176-177; Vickers, *Bali: a paradise created*, pp. 169-170, with others embracing the PKI. This PKI's following, negligible even in 1955 (around 7.9%), grew steadily, partly on the basis of its support for the dispossessed, partly because it offered a path to political patronage through Suteja. Thus a number of the larger businessmen were public supporters of the party, and the PKI leader, Puger, was himself a wealthy entrepreneur, though it should be noted that the PNI was even more active in the distribution of patronage at kabupaten level, where the ruling families were still in place. At village level, inter-village rivalries were often translated into support for opposing parties, so that whole villages might declare for the PKI, thus condemning themselves to extirpation after the coup. Villagers, however, were not the only victims: fourteen members of the ruling house of Jembrana were killed as well as other landlords who were associated with the PKI.

Inter-party competition was strong, too. Although their economic position was strong, the old ruling families were deeply resentful of the way in which political power had been kept out of their hands after independence. When Bali re-entered the Republic in 1950, Sukarno had overruled the preferences of the old elite to choose as Kepala daerah (regional head) Anak Agung Bagus Suteja, who had fought the Dutch on Bali during the national revolution (1945-49) and was son of the nationalistically-inclined raja of Jembrana. During the early 1950s, the PKI had not been able to turn its political energies into backing the PNI and the PSI, and and both parties performed better in Bali than anywhere else in the country. In 1958, when Bali became a province, the elite tried to unseat Suteja, nominating a PNI member, I Nyoman Mantik, for the new post of governor. Once again, however, Sukarno chose Suteja, overturning Mantik's victory in the provincial assembly. Faced with a provincial establishment dominated by the PNI (the PSI being banned in 1960), Suteja attempted to shore up his political base by increasing the representation of the PKI and other leftists in legislative and executive bodies on Bali. The PKI's following, negligible even in 1955 (around 7.9%), grew steadily, partly on the basis of its support for the dispossessed, partly because it offered a path to political patronage through Suteja. Thus a number of the larger businessmen were public supporters of the party, and the PKI leader, Puger, was himself a wealthy entrepreneur, though it should be noted that the PNI was even more active in the distribution of patronage at kabupaten level, where the ruling families were still in place. At village level, inter-village rivalries were often translated into support for opposing parties, so that whole villages might declare for the PKI, thus condemning themselves to extirpation after the coup. Villagers, however, were not the only victims: fourteen members of the ruling house of Jembrana were killed as well as other landlords who were associated with the PKI.

It is interesting that in both accounts translated here we find now-rare reference to Chinese Indonesians as victims, in this case Chinese businessmen singled out for retribution after aligning themselves with the PKI. At the time of the killings, much attention focussed on the fate of Chinese, and it was even alleged that 'most' of the victims were Chinese.

---


Observers speculated on whether they were targeted because of their alleged closeness to the PKI (seen as an aspect of the PKI’s good relations with the Chinese Communist Party) or whether Indonesians resentful of the economic wealth of the Chinese simply took a convenient opportunity for looting and settling scores. Coppel, however, has concluded that anti-Chinese violence was probably not an important part of the killings of 1965-69. There was a ‘frenzied rampage’ against Chinese in Makassar (Ujung Pandang) in November 1965 and repeated outbreaks over the next two years, but the level of violence was not dramatically different from that of incidents well before and well after the coup. Chinese members of the party and of affiliated organizations such as the BAPERKI were of course in especially great peril in 1965-66. But thanks to a government regulation of May 1959 banning Chinese from retail trade in rural areas, Coppel argues, relatively few Chinese were present in the countryside where the killings were most fierce on Java. To this he adds the observation that many wealthy Chinese must have already developed protective relationships with local power-holders, civilian and military, which they were able to mobilize when the crisis came. This may point to an explanation for Bali’s anti-Chinese incidents: the relative dominance of the Left at provincial level in Bali led men such as Tjan Wie, described by Soe Hok Gie below, to make the wrong choice of political patron.12

As for Indonesia as a whole, there is neither certainty nor consensus on the number of people killed. The London Economist’s report on the basis of information collected by a team of Indonesian graduates suggested that 100,000 people may have died in the few months from December 1965 to February 1966, and estimates have gone as high as 750,00013, but figures most commonly cited lie in the 20,000-60,000 range. Even these figures, however, have been called into question by Mabbett and Brackman.14 This uncertainty arises from the even greater shortage of anecdote and evidence than we have for Java. Although many authors, including Soe Hok Gie in this volume, report unprecedented ferocity in the Balinese killings, it is difficult to pin accounts to time and place. Without Hughes’ account, our image of the Balinese killings would be a rather more sober one. Despite Sarwo Edjie’s cheerful attribution of all responsibility to the Balinese, a number of stories make it clear that it was the arrival of army units with death lists which played a key role in prompting the killing in many cases.15 Webb cites a case in which a Catholic village in western Bali refused military orders to kill communists in neighbouring Hindu-Balinese village.16 It is probable that the army, overwhelmingly non-Balinese, was reluctant to carry out a massacres which would have pitched ethnic groups in a direct confrontation, and preferred to see Balinese killing Balinese. Army accounts of spontaneous Balineic ferocity may therefore merit some scepticism. There is also some evidence that many killings - which took place especially in the eastern regions close to Java - were carried out by Ansor gangs who crossed the Bali Strait from Banyuwangi for this purpose.17

A second reason for scepticism is the special place of Bali in the Western imagination as a place of enchantment, an island of smiling, deeply cultured people in close harmony with their world and with each other. Edward Said and others have shown how such images, whatever their factual basis, are often part of an ongoing definition of Western culture and a number of scholars, including Boon and Vickers18, have traced the evolution of contradictory ideas of the nature of Bali. The joyfulness of life on Bali which some authors have described is for others a standing rebuke to the lifestyles of the West, and there may have been an over-eagerness on the


15 See, for example, Don Moser, ‘Where the rivers ran crimson from butchery’, Life 61 (1 July 1966), p. 28; and Donald Kirk, ‘Bali exorcises an evil spirit’, The Reporter 15 December 1966, p. 42.


part of Western observers to 'discover' that frenzied violence was as much a part of Balinese culture as rippling music and sleek sculptures.

On 3 January 1965, around 300 members of the BTI from Mendoyo in kabupaten Jembrana20 organized an action to cut forest in the area of Pangkangmanggis and Yeh Embang. Two days later, a small number of state police arrived and were able to stop the action. As is known, there were 290 hectares of neglected forest in the area.

In the same month, it was also reported that there was an aksi sepihak in Buleleng to implement the government's land reform regulations. With the intention of carrying out these regulations, the BTI attacked not only landlords but also small peasants. One such conflict over land took place between Pan Tablen, a land owner, and Wayan Wanci, his tenant. The local assistant camat has already decided that the land should be surrendered to Pan Tablen, and this decision had been ratified by the bupati of Buleleng. Wayan Wanci, however, was a member of the BTI and he decided to retain the land. On 8 January 1965, he summoned 250 other peasants and destroyed the house of Pan Tablen.

Another incident concerning land occurred between I Made Abian, a small peasant, and his son-in-law, I Sukaria, who was a member of the BTI. In front of kecamatan officials, I Sukaria promised to return the land to his father-in-law, but later, with the support of his friends in the BTI, refused to do so. With the help of the police, I Sukaria was persuaded

---

20 The scattered incidents mentioned in this account all occurred in the western kabupaten of Buleleng, Jembrana and Tabanan, areas where conditions for tenant farmers and sharecroppers were considerably better than in the eastern regions of Klungkung (home of the Dewa Agung), Karangasem, Gianyar and Bangli. The redistribution of land was carried out far more thoroughly in Buleleng and Jembrana than elsewhere in Bali and these kabupaten were the site of the earliest and most bitter violence in 1965-66.
Robert Cribb, Soe Hok Gie et al.

...to hand the land over. On 14 January 1965 at about 3.00 p.m., however, I Sukaria and 180 BTI members moved onto the land, cut the corn that was growing on it and as night fell began to work the land.

A third case connected with land occurred between I Nyoman Gedang, a small farmer, and his tenant Wayan Tiasa, both from Kubutambahan. According to the Land Reform and Sharecropping Committee, the land was to be returned to its owner by 1 October 1964. On 15 January 1965, I Nyoman Gedang began to work the land, but three days later, Wayan Tiasa and two hundred others pulled out the plants and replaced them with his own.

Around the middle of January 1965, the atmosphere in Mambang village was full of tension because of a dispute over the purchase of land by Nang Deger, a member of the PNI, from the Puri Aseman. The Land Reform Committee for Selemadeg had decided that from 17 January 1965 the new owner should have the right to work the land. Bagus Budal, however, a BTI member who cultivated the land when it was owned by the Puri Aseman, refused to accept the verdict and continued to work the land. On 19 January a number of BTI members accompanied Bagus Budal noisily to the Selemadeg kecamatan office and protested forcefully against the decision. There was a long discussion between the representative of the BTI peasants and officials from the kabupaten and the Land reform Committee, and eventually it was decided that the land should not be worked at all for the time being until the kabupaten government had reached a decision.

On 1 March 1965, at about 11.00 a.m., there was an incident at Jatiluwih in Kecamatan Penebel, Kabupaten Tabanan. According to a report to the local camat by the head of Jatiluwih village, a villager called Nang Janten, his wife, son and daughter-in-law, were picking coffee in a plantation he had pawned when about a hundred people led by Nang Renjung of the BTI had surrounded them, seized and tortured them and then tied them up. They were told that they would only be released if they joined the BTI. Fortunately, a number of police arrived just in time. Neng Janten and his family were released and sent to hospital to have their serious injuries treated.

At midnight on 4 March 1965, several members of the Mendoyo branch of the PNI were attacked by a group armed with parang and other knives. The attack was led by Nyoman Gedur, with about two PKI members. Meanwhile, the PNI members were able to capture seven people from...