

# **The Indonesian Massacre of 1965 and Reconciliation Efforts in Contemporary Indonesia**

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## **Introduction**

Indonesia declared its independence in August 17, 1945 after more than three centuries of colonization by the Dutch, and a short period of Japanese occupation (1942-1945), with Soekarno as the first president and Mohammad Hatta as his vice president. However, as an independent country, Indonesia encountered many problems economically, socially and politically. Under the Soekarno regime known as the Old Order, there were two powers; the Armed Forces (ABRI) and the Communist Party (PKI), both vying for the attention of Soeharto and intent on influencing his economic and political policies. The PKI was the largest communist party outside Russia and China at that time, and as such was perceived as a threat to American security in Asia. Soekarno's ideology, known as Nasakom (Nationalism, Religion and Communism), was designed to embrace the interests of the nationalists, religious organizations and laypersons and the Communist Party; however, the idea of combining three widely divergent ideologies triggered endless conflicts that pitted the military and religious right against the Communist Part. This conflict came to a head on September 30, 1965, when six generals and a lieutenant were killed in a bungled attempt at abductions destined to head off a coup against Soekarno. Major General Soeharto stepped in at this point, seeing a golden opportunity to pin the blame for the murder of the generals on the Communist Party, and their supposed allies, the Indonesian Women's Movement (Gerwani), who were falsely accused of mutilating the generals in a wild orgy that ended with their murder.

In time Indonesia's first president was forced to hand over power to Soeharto; during the same period a genocidal campaign was unleashed that brought death to somewhere between 300,000 and a million Indonesians identified as "communist sympathizers". While former President Abdurachman Wahid initiated a process of rehabilitation of survivors of the genocide of 1965, to

this day Indonesia has yet to work out a program of reconciliation that takes account of the needs of both the victims and perpetrators. This paper is aimed at addressing this issue.

### **Brief historical background on the Indonesian Genocide**

By 1965 the government of the *Orde Lama*, or “Old Order” of President Soekarno had reached a point of crisis. Following internal rebellions in central Sumatra and Sulawesi of the mid-1950s, Soekarno had disbanded Parliament and established what he termed a *Demokrasi Terpimpin*, or Guided Democracy (1959-1965), which was unpopular with many elements of the armed forces and civil society. His famous ideology of Nasakom (*Nasionalism, Agama, Komunis* or “Nationalism, Religion and Communism”) had created further tension by attempting to bring together the dominant religion (Islam) and the doctrine of communism, which was generally believed to be atheist in its essential formulation. This led to deep suspicions that Soekarno was attempting to bring an end to religious aspects of Indonesian society by first forcing an alliance with the left, then turning on a weakened religious majority and bringing its power to an end. Soekarno’s isolationist policy in international affairs had further deepened the crisis by bringing Indonesia to the brink of financial collapse. His speech of August 1965, titled *Tahun Vivere Periculosa*, “the Year of Living Dangerously” must have been read by many as a sign that he was prepared to act on his left-leaning principles and align himself with the Communist Party to bring an end to all opposition to his rule, especially from the Army and religious majority of the civilian population.

There were also particular factors that led to the emergence of a very unstable political situation in August-September 1965. One of the main factors was the health of Soekarno who collapsed during his working day on 5 August 1965. His condition was diagnosed by a team of doctors from the Republic of China (RRT, *Republic Rakyat Tjina*) who had been called in by the Communist Party chief D.N. Aidit. Their conclusion was that Soekarno would either die or be paralyzed for the rest of his life (Nugroho Notosusanto and Saleh, 1967:7, The Centre for Information Analysis, 1999:4, McGregor, 2007:3). This brought up the important matter of the succession to the presidency after Soekarno passed away. There were two candidates most often mentioned as possible successors to Soekarno: General A. Yani and General A.H. Nasution, both

major generals of the Army. Soekarno preferred General A. Yani, who was serving at the time as his Minister for Defence and Security and Chief of Staff of the armed forces, rather than General Nasution.

Another significant factor that may have helped to trigger the chaotic events of 1965 was an emerging confrontation between the Communist Party (PKI) and right-wing forces among the armed forces, especially in the Army. Right-wing elements in the Army were strongly supported by conservative religious groups like NU (Nahdlatul Ulama), which were strongly anti-communist. While the PKI (Communist Party) had allies and sympathizers among the officer corps of the Army they did not want a candidate for the succession to be drawn from the Army since they had had a long and bitter history of rivalry, marked in recent memory by the massacre of PKI forces led by Muso at Madiun in 1948 by right-wing elements of the Army - this at the very time when both sides were fighting against the Dutch colonial forces during the revolution that eventually led to the independence of Indonesia in 1949.<sup>1</sup>

Tensions between the Army and the PKI were also high due to the perception of many officers that communist ideology was incompatible with the Pancasila, the ideological foundation of the Indonesian state first promulgated by Soekarno and his allies in June 1945. In common Indonesian perspective, the PKI was a party of atheists and so in direct contrast with the first of the five principles of the Pancasila, which clearly stated that the Indonesian state should be founded on “Belief in One God” (*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*). However, despite significant opposition to its materialist principles, the PKI was fortunate to have gained the protection of President Soekarno, largely because he considered the PKI as his chief ally in providing a counter-balance to the power of the Army and the right-wing religious groups (Notosusanto and Saleh, 1967:4).

From early on during his presidency, the PKI had shown their support for Soekarno and had been enthusiastic supporters of his efforts to balance the growing power of the Army (Cribb, 1992:349). In return, the PKI gained much freedom to operate in Java, sometimes directly

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<sup>1</sup> For a recent review of the Madiun Affair of 1948 see McGregor (2007:49-50).

establishing left-wing organizations, at other times bringing affiliated organizations into their circle of influence. The growing power of the PKI might well have been considered a threat by the Army, especially when talk circulated about establishing a fifth force recruited from peasants, fishermen and other members of youth organizations in addition to the four military forces known as ABRI (*Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia*) that already existed: the Air Force (*Angkatan Udara*), Navy (*Angkatan Laut*), Army (*Angkatan Darat*) and Police (*Angkatan Kepolisian*).

By mid 1965, a rumour was spreading among the military and the political parties that a Council of Generals (*Dewan Jenderal*) backed by the CIA had been formed and that they would attempt a coup aimed at bringing down Soekarno and removing him from the presidency, which was considered by more conservative members of the Armed Forces to be leaning too much to the left in favour of the PKI (*The Selected Document around the G.30.S* compiled by Dinuth, 1997:20,158). The rumour spread that the coup attempt planned by the Council of Generals would be carried out on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Armed Force Day on 5 October 1965. In reaction to the “coup” rumour, the Presidential Guard of Soekarno and several left-wing parties and other loyal organizations established the Council of Revolution (*Dewan Revolusi*) chaired by Lieutenant Colonel Untung bin Syamsuri (Anderson and McVey, 1971:124-25; the Centre for Information Analysis, 1999:6, Crouch, 1978:97).<sup>2</sup> The Untung group was supported by the Seventh (Diponegoro) Military Territorial Division based in Semarang (Anderson and McVey, 1971:1) under the command of Brigadier General Surjosumpeno and also by a group of officers from the Air Force under the command of Air Marshal Omar Dhani based at Halim Perdanakusumah airfield in Jakarta (Notosusanto and Saleh, 1967: appendix D).

### **The “Abortive Coup” of 30 September—1 October 1965**

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note here that the members of the Indonesian Revolutionary Council were from various components of the government and civil society, which included a number of political parties and religious groups. Organizations with large male and female memberships were represented as well as organizations with a wide variety of ethnic groups among their members, including Chinese (Anderson and McVey, 1971:127-29, Dinuth, 1997:48-49 in the document “Decision No. 1 concerning the composition of the Indonesian Revolution Council”).

According to accounts by the New Order regime of Suharto, there were many personnel from a number of military divisions who were key actors in the events of 30 September 1965; some were important as initiators of the coup attempt and some were simply pawns who were set in motion to carry out the kidnappings. What we do know is that on the night of Thursday *Kliwon* 30 September 1965 a group of conspirators led by Lieutenant Colonel Untung, military commander of the Tjakrabirawa division or Presidential Guard, attempted to kidnap seven generals who were believed to constitute the Council of Generals - Lieutenant General A. Yani, Major General Soeprapto, Major General S. Parman, Brigadier General Soetojo Siswomiharjo, Brigadier General D.I. Pandjaitan, Major General Harjono, and General Abdul Haris Nasution<sup>3</sup>. General Nasution was able to escape from the raid by climbing over the wall of the Iraqi Embassy next to his house. However, his five-year-old daughter, Ade Irma Suryani Nasution, was shot and died in the hospital a few days later.

If we talk about the events of 30 September 1965, the first figure that is usually connected to the events is Lieutenant Colonel Untung Sutopo bin Syamsuri (Lt. Col. Untung), the military commander of the Tjakrabirawa division or Presidential Guard (Hughes, 1967:18, Wieringa, 2002:283). It is often stated in official versions of events that D.N. Aidit, the leader of the Communist Party, was also directly connected to the events, but more realistic accounts show that he had to be awakened when his aides brought him news of the events and this throws doubt on the possibility of his direct involvement. The presence of Untung at Lubang Buaya during the night of the coup has long been held to strengthen the suspicion of his involvement with the coup group.

In carrying out the “abortive coup”, a group of conspirators headed by Colonel Untung divided their responsibilities. The Pasopati division commanded by Doel Arief, First Lieutenant of the Infantry, had the responsibility of kidnapping the generals; the Bima Sakti division under the leadership of Infantry Captain Suradi was given the task of taking over the control room of *Radio Republik Indonesia* (RRI) and other telecommunications systems and the Ghatotkaca division

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<sup>3</sup> *Kliwon* is one of the days of the five-day Javanese “market week” that is noted for its special “powers” when it coincides with Thursday of the seven-day week. It seems likely that this day was chosen specifically for the abductions due to its connotations of being powerful.

under Air Major Gatot Sukresno had the responsibility to coordinate activities at the Lubang Buaya training ground and to recruit and train the volunteers who would provide back-up for the insurrection (Hughes, 1967:27, Notosusanto and Saleh, 1967:246, *The Selected Document around G.30.S/PKI* compiled by Dinuth, 1997:28).

The Pasopati division commanded by First Infantry Lieutenant Doel Arief had the responsibility to kidnap the seven generals of the presumed “Council of Generals” (Hughes, 1967:27). In the original planning surrounding the kidnapping of the generals, there was no command or plot to kill them. According to the plan, they were to be kidnapped and taken to the presidential palace to be asked about the truth or falsity of the rumour that had been circulating about the formation of a Council of Generals whose aim was to remove Soekarno from office. But what happened in the implementation of the command in the field differed a great deal from the plan. What actually ensued was a series of chaotic events that to some minds suggest an intentional effort to create chaos and abort the original plan. For example, the command is said to have been that the generals should be arrested “alive” but the plot was changed into “alive or dead” due to unexpected events during the abduction. General A. Yani for example, did not obey the summons of the raiding party to go to the presidential palace in a peaceful manner, but resisted, and was thus shot on the spot (the Centre for Information Analysis, 1999:40).

Omar Dhani, the Air Vice Marshal of the Air Force, is also assumed to have been involved in the events of 30 September 1965 due to his role in making use of the Lubang Buaya area of the Air Force base at Halim Perdanakusumah airfield as a training base for volunteers from the *Pemuda Rakyat* (Indonesian Youth), Gerwani and other mass organizations in preparing for the “crush Malaysia” (*Ganyang Malaysia*) campaign of Soekarno.<sup>4</sup> These volunteers were to support the formation of a “fifth force” composed of peasants and *Pemuda Rakyat* volunteers, who would be

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<sup>4</sup> The “*Ganyang Malaysia*” campaign was the Indonesian project to crush Malaysia, which in the Soekarnoist view has been used by British to establish a new colonial base during the 1960s. Soekarno had long set his agenda as opposition to what he termed “Nekolim”, the “Forces of Neo-colonialism and Imperialism” and had chosen the fledgling state of Malaysia as a target in this struggle. This led to a series of military misadventures along the Malay-Indonesian border in northern Kalimantan (Borneo) that did nothing positive on the military front and may have increased the opposition of the officer corps to his presidency.

trained to use firearms and follow military discipline in order to develop a counterforce to the official armed forces (Anderson and McVey, 1971:67; The Centre for Information Analysis, 1999:46, Wieringa, 2002:283). The main piece of evidence used at the trial of Omar Dhani to show that he was involved in the so-called “Movement of 30 September” was that his name appeared on the list of the Council of Revolution as mentioned in their “Decision No. 1 concerning the composition of the Indonesian Revolutionary Council” (Anderson and McVey, 1971:124 and Dinuth, 1997:48). However, in actual fact Omar Dhani’s role in the events of mid-1965 was more general, as a facilitator for training of militant volunteers in the Lubang Buaya area and as the mentor for the so-called the fifth force in instructing them in military discipline and the use of firearms. It was this “fifth force” in training at the Lubang Buaya field that became the main target of government propaganda following the abortive counter-coup of September 30 and October 1, 1965.<sup>5</sup>

### **Aftermath of the Abortive Coup**

While some scholars have spoken of a “spontaneous outbreak of violence” following the events of September-October 1965 there was a time lag of several months before the actual start of the massacres that took between 300,000 and a million lives. One important development during this period was the creation of the “myth of Gerwani”. In this version of the aborted coup (or counter-coup) attempt the story began to circulate that the “women of Gerwani” had mutilated the generals in a wild orgy with men of the PKI that ended with the murder of the generals. Evidence for the spread of these stories can be found in the archives of the KITLV in Leiden, where copies of issues of journals of the Armed Forces like *Berita Yudha* (9 October 1965) and *Harian Angkatan Bersendjata* (11 October 1965) spoke, for example, of the story of “Jamilah”, a

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<sup>5</sup> The fifth force volunteers who were trained at Lubang Buaya beginning on 5 July 1965 were under the command of Major Udara Suyono and assisted by Gatot Sukrisno and Major Udara Sukarto Kartono. Potential members of the fifth force were recruited from mass organizations all over Indonesia especially from Java, and included mass organizations like BTI (*Barisan Tani Indonesia*), PR (*Pemuda Rakyat*), Jamiatul Muslimin, Universitas Res Publikas SOBSI (*Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia*), and Gerwani (Dinuth, 1997:15). Each party selected its best members to be sent to Jakarta to participate in the training based in the Lubang Buaya area. During the lead up to the events of 30 September 1965 a group of volunteers from the “fifth force” in training at Lubang Buaya was chosen to be among the conspirators who were to capture the seven generals.

17-year old widow who was described as having sexual intercourse with one of the generals before they were murdered. The name given to the group of conspirators in these publications represents another aspect of the myth-making or black propaganda that was to have terrifying results for many innocent Indonesians. The words *Gerakan Tiga Puluh September* (“Movement of 30 September”) were used to form the acronym *Gestapu* that intentionally made people think of the terror of Nazi Germany; this was combined with constant reinforcement of the idea that the PKI was planning to eradicate religion in Indonesia and thus prepare young men with strong religious principles to think of participating in the mass arrests and ‘elimination’ of ‘Communist sympathizers’ that began in January 1966.

I won’t detail the history of the actual genocide here, except to repeat that the figure on direct casualties ranges between 300,000 and a million people. I want to focus instead on the long-term effects on the Indonesian people. Indonesia was changed forever during the last few months of 1965. Major General Soeharto, who went on to rule as President until 1998, took action immediately in the days following the coup, isolating then-President Soekarno, and forming a new branch of the military called Kopkamtib, the “Committee for the Restoration of Law and Order”. In addition to organizing the detention centers and mass arrests that laid the basis for the genocide of 1966-67, Kopkamtib designed and implemented a system of registration and surveillance of all Indonesians whose original aim was to identify all ‘Communists’ and ‘Communist sympathizers’, and following this to ensure that anyone from among these groups who survived the secret, nighttime massacres that often followed upon arrest and detention, or deportation to the prison camp on Buru Island, would be marked forever in their Identity Card (KTP, *Kartu Tanda Penduduk*) as having been implicated in the events of September 1965. This system also penalized those who were merely related to victims of the genocide, or survivors of imprisonment, who were listed in their official registration papers with the local government with the designation *tidak bersih lingkungan* (“not clean in environment”). This made it almost impossible for them to enter the Civil Service, or gain admission to a state university. Beyond this, a system of controls on movement was set in motion that included the need to obtain a *Surat Tanda Kelakuan Baik* (“Letter Certifying Good Behavior”) in support of any major move of location for work or study, and upon arrival in a new area of residence, the need to obtain a *Surat*

*Tanda Melaporkan Diri* (“Letter of Having Reported Oneself”). Each of these documents contained a line requiring the applicant to state where they had been on the night of 30 September 1965, and whether they or any member of their family had ever had any connection with the PKI or its affiliates. In addition to providing a quasi-legal basis for the imprisonment and summary execution of an enormous number of Indonesians, the work of Kopkamtib thus was able to establish a bureaucracy of control that was described as intended to “prevent the rebirth of the Communist party” but in actual fact was a constant reminder of the monopoly of the state on terror.

### **The account of one of the Gerwani Leaders in Bali**

Ibu Pasek, whose real name is Ni Ketut Pasek Kariasih, born in 1932 in Denpasar, Bali, informed me that Gerwani was a very interesting women’s organization whose members were devoted to social causes, and not at all the terrifying organization devoted to the ‘spread of Communism’ that was claimed by the architects of the New Order (Orde Baru) regime of former President Soeharto. According to Ibu Pasek the programs offered by Gerwani were very attractive not only for women but also for men, especially poor farmers from the rural areas of Bali.<sup>6</sup> As the deputy director of Gerwani in Bali, Ibu Pasek was very active in implementing programs designed by Gerwani for establishing schools for children around her area in Denpasar. Being born in the city she had never worked in the rice-fields, and so became very enthusiastic when Gerwani planned to help poor farmers working in the rice fields in the Karangasem area of East Bali. She says that she tried very hard to put her feet in the shoes of the farmers. As she describes her experiences working in the rice-fields, she managed to follow along with the work of the men and women of the farming community she joined, but nearly fainted at one point from not having anything to drink while working under the hot sun in the mud and water of the fields.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Men who were attracted by the more militant approach of left-wing organizations towards the question of land reform usually joined the *Barisan Tani Indonesia* (BTI) or “Indonesian Farmers Front”, without necessarily adopting a leftist ideology, or even understanding its broader implications.

<sup>7</sup> Knowing that Bu Pasek enjoyed visiting farming areas, I took her to my village in a rural area where she could recall her fond memories while visiting with the farmers and other villagers in the rice-field areas. She and her second husband, Pak Jendra, were very happy when they were gazing at the lush greenness of the rice-fields (personal communication, April-May 2008).

In 1963 when Mount Agung, the highest mountain in Bali, erupted, Ibu Pasek and other Gerwani members went to the affected areas to distribute aid in the form of food, clothing and materials for temporary shelter. She and the other Gerwani members could only reach the affected area by means of helicopter because there were no passable roads connecting the affected areas with Denpasar, where the relief effort was being coordinated. Moreover, since there were no suitable landing sites they had to drop the food supplies and other items from the helicopter. The food that was prepared in the Denpasar area was divided into small packages to facilitate carrying and distribution. Ibu Pasek glowed with happiness when she talked about her experiences in helping under-privileged people. But her happiness as one of the leaders of Gerwani suddenly ended in tragedy when Gerwani was violently suppressed in the months following the killing of six popular generals and a lieutenant during the “abortive coup” of 30 September 1965, known in Indonesia mainly by its acronyms G.30.S/PKI or Gestapu (*Gerakan 30 September/Partai Komunis Indonesia*). During the months following these events, Ibu Pasek was among the many Indonesians who were arrested and confined to detention centers without due process of law. Ibu Pasek survived her imprisonment, but she endured severe torture when people interrogated her about her involvement in the Gerwani organization (personal communication, 2007- 2008).

The events of September 1965 marked a turning point for the women’s movement of Indonesia, which was brought to a sudden and violent halt prompted by black propaganda spread by the New Order, the new political regime initiated by Major General Suharto during the two years following the events of 1965. After first reviewing briefly the account of one of the perpetrators of the mass killings of 1966-67 other Gerwani members who were labelled as affiliated with the Communist Party after the events of September 1965.

### **The Reconciliation Efforts**

There are a few efforts for reconciliation and rehabilitation being carried out by the non-government organizations both in Java and Bali. The Indonesian government especially during the New Order under the Soeharto regime established governmental organizations like Kopkamtib, the Committee for the Restoration of Law and Order that gave the impression of

being legally constituted branches of the government, but were in fact created through Presidential Directive, without the deliberations or ratification of the legislative and judicial branches of government, so at best arguably legal in the constitutional sense. This allowed Kopkamtib, and its successor Bakorstanas (*Badan Koordinasi Bantuan Pemantapan Stabilitas Nasional*, “Board for the Coordination of Assistance in Establishing National Stability”, established in 1988) to effectively control all discussion of the suppression of the political left and the Indonesian women’s movement until Bakorstanas was finally closed in the year 2000. Following the “Era of Reformation” that began with the fall of the New Order in 1988 a new sense of the ability to speak freely could be felt immediately in Indonesia. Discussion groups addressing all manner of social and historical problems are now commonplace on liberal college campuses in Indonesia, and creative writing about the tragedy of 1965-67 and its long-term effects can be published without fear of political repercussions.<sup>8</sup> However, continuing government concern about open discussion of the founding myths of the New Order Regime of former President Soeharto (1967-1998) are still evident in actions like the recent banning of the Indonesian translation of an important historical study of the events of 1965 by the historian John Roosa (2006).

While there are local organizations that bring together survivors of the quasi-legal detentions of 1965-68, very few of these have a mandate to promote efforts for reconciliation. I believe this is largely because their focus is to work together as friends to overcome the stigma attached to them and their families because of lingering suspicion around their ‘involvement’ in the events of September-October 1965.

However, there are a number of organizations that are playing an active role in reconciliation efforts. One of these is the a non-governmental organisations based in Yogyakarta known as

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<sup>8</sup> The Balinese writer Putu Arya Tirtawirya produced several short stories dealing with the terror of 1966-67 as early as 1979 (see the bibliography of this paper for details). Apparently since Tirtawirya lived in Lombok, far from the center of literary activity in Jakarta, his works escaped the notice of Kopkamtib and the government board of censors. More recent works on themes related to the events of 1965-67 or its long-term consequences include short stories like “Kalanaga” by Triyatno Triwikramo (2009) and “Kami Membongkar Rumah” by Imam Muhtarom (2010).

*Syarikat Indonesia*, the acronym for *Masyarakat Santri untuk Advokasi Rakyat Indonesia* (Advocacy for the Indonesian People by the Society of Students of the Muslim Faith). Perhaps due to its strong roots in the practice of Islamic piety that has become a major force in Indonesian society in the last several decades, this organization has been able to effectively advocate for both the civil and political rights of those who were accused of being communists or communist sympathizers in the past. *Syarikat Indonesia* was founded in 1993 by the youth of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the conservative Islamic organization that remains the primary organization representing the communities that espouse the traditional, syncretic form of Javanese Islam. Members of this organization played a significant role in the mass killings of 1965-67, largely due to having been convinced through skilful use of the media—and the powerful rumor mill that has a more direct influence on opinion making in rural Indonesia—that the PKI had been on the verge of a campaign to wipe out Islam in Indonesia when its plans were ‘disrupted’ by Major General Soeharto’s intervention in the events of September-October 1965. The main purpose of the *Syarikat Indonesia* is to create a more peaceful and democratic Indonesia through an reconciliation and rehabilitation of civil and political rights of the victims of the mass detentions and secret massacres of 1965-68.

The tragedy of 1965 was the most traumatic event in the history of modern Indonesia history because it happened not in a single place, but all throughout the archipelago, and with special ferocity in Java and Bali, the major centers of the Indonesian population. That tragic event directly caused many deaths of innocent people without due process of law, both for those who were known to be directly involved in the Communist Party, and the many people who belonged to social organizations that were branded as “sympathetic” to Communism. The mass-killings that happened mainly in Java and Bali were nearly always carried out in the middle of the night, with the victims who had already been detained and were defenceless.

The survivors of the ordeal of detention were also treated unjustly during the New Order regime. Operating under the ‘regulations’ of Kopkamtib people who had been detained were stigmatized by having their Identity Cards (KTP, *Kartu Tanda Penduduk*) marked in the upper right-hand corner with the letters ET, meaning “ex-Tapol” or “ex-political detainee”. Indonesians who held

these special ID card could never get any position as civil servants, attend a state university or find work in any government-related sector of the economy. Through the designation “unclean environment” Kopkamtib also made certain that an equal stigma was applied to extended family members of “ex-Tapol”, including children who knew nothing about the political climate or events of the 1960s. In order to counteract these long-term negative effects of the tragedy of 1965 the Syarikat Indonesia seeks to advocate for the political and civil rights of the victims of illegal detention through their several reconciliation and rehabilitation efforts.

The Syarikat Indonesia’s charter calls for the carrying out of reconciliation and rehabilitation efforts as follows:

1. Investigation

In this stage, Syarikat carries out investigations in certain areas in Java to compile case histories from survivors of the detentions of 1965-68 with the expectation that the information gained from these investigations will assist the Syarikat to make sure the community around the investigation gains a more realistic perspective on the lives of the victims, and thus to change their perception toward the victims. For the victims themselves, Syarikat provides a forum to express their feelings of oppression and marginalization caused by discrimination from the community where they live.

2. Mediation

In this effort, the Syarikat has approached key persons to be the mediators for both the victims and community members in the places they live. In the Islamic areas, it is still very hard to approach people for reconciliation due to the perception created in the past that the all Communists were atheists who are still determined to eradicate religion and establish a secular state. It has been the Syarikat’s goal to convince religiously inclined communities that this is not the case, and to make them aware that the survivors are not trying to create civil unrest but only want to be treated fairly. Since the members of the Syarikat are devout Muslims, it is easy for them to approach Islamic religious leaders, termed *kyai* in Java, and ask them to be mediators and peace-makers between the victims

of the repression of 1965-68 and the community members. This effort has been successfully implemented in many areas of Central Java by the Syarikat.

### 3. Seminars

The Syarikat also hold public seminars with participants drawn both from the public at large and from victims and perpetrators in the repression of 1965-68. The Syarikat invites key speakers who can accommodate differing opinions, solutions, and seek the best way forward for reconciliation and rehabilitation. The key speakers also try to gain as much insight as possible from the stories told by participants and statements of the victims of oppression expressing their desire to be fully accepted by their communities. However, these seminars are not always success due to the continuing stigma attached to what the Indonesian state continues to refer to as the “latent danger of the banned Communist Party (PKI)”.

### 4. Public campaigns

The purpose of public campaigns conducted by the Syarikat is to gain support from the public to advocate for the civil and political rights of the victims of the repression of 1965-68. The Syarikat has found that effective means for these efforts include public outreach via mass-media such as the development of websites, publishing articles, books and magazines as well as appearing in talk-shows on television.

### 5. Lobbying

Lobbying efforts of the Syarikat are conducted in order to seek direct influence among important authority figures who are involved in creating policy in the legislative and executive branches of the government, with the special aim of encouraging the drafting of a “bill of rights” for victims of the illegal detentions and repression of 1965-68. There are two activities of the Syarikat that fall into this category: proactively approaching members of the regional and national legislative bodies (DPRD and DPR), and by participating in informal meeting with representatives of the major political parties, and

other important government officials who can be asked to support the idea of reconciliation and rehabilitation for the victims of repression and illegal detention.

#### 6. Drafting of legislative documents

The Syarikat is currently seeking to assist in the drafting of laws to protect ex-political detainees by developing a team of experts who work with representatives of the legislative branch of the national government to draft laws and regulations that will advocate for the civil and political rights of the victims of repression based on the evaluations and perceived needs drawn from the investigations and mediations of the Syarikat and the history of Syarikat discussions of past policies and their effects on ex-political detainees.

All those efforts of reconciliation and rehabilitation carried out by the Syarikat have met with success, despite the continuing presence of minor obstacles in some parts of rural Java. In Bali, another organization, known as the YPKP, or *Yayasan Penelitian Korban Pembunuhan 1965-66* (“Foundation for Investigation into the Lives of Victims of the Mass Killings of 1965-66”) has begun to make inroads into the difficult task of ensuring that Balinese victims of the detentions and repression of the early New Order period can be rehabilitated in their communities. In Bali the victims of the repression of the mid-1960s are less fortunate, in large part due to the strong religious belief in *karma*, the belief that any action will produce good or bad consequences. The problem of circularity arises here in that the bad things that happened to community members who have, rightly or wrongly, been associated with the Communist party, are seen as a direct reflection of their own ‘sins’ of the past. This creates an environment for efforts at reconciliation and rehabilitation that is more challenging for organizations working to advocate for the rights of victims in Bali. However, the YPKP has been able to make progress in their work and we can hope that the growing number of educated young Balinese will begin to understand that complex social and political issues need to be viewed from varying perspectives, and not from the point of view of a single, religious conviction.

## Conclusion

From talking to a number of survivors of the repression of 1965-68 in Java and Bali I have drawn the crude conclusion that the most important means for progress in the treatment of the survivors will be made if and when the Indonesian government makes a decision to apologize officially to the victims of the mass-killings of 1965-66, in order that they can be accepted in the community where they live. The national government continues to play an enormous role in opinion-making, so their positive intervention in the processes of reconciliation and rehabilitation would be the most effective way of bringing about a healthy change in the perspective of local communities and individuals. The tragic events of September-October 1965 are still shrouded in mystery, so another positive step forward can be taken by ensuring that the next generation is truly about their true history, not a history that has been orchestrated by the powers that be in order to justify the basis of their control over the Indonesian people. While the work of NGOs has been, and is, making a significant contribution to the rehabilitation of ex-political detainees in some areas, the larger effort to achieve reconciliation and rehabilitation will not be affective without government involvement in support for increasing the awareness of Indonesian people of the need for peace and unity for all Indonesians.

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