



Soe Tjen Marching

With original photography by Angus Nicholls

The End of Silence

Accounts of the 1965 Genocide
in Indonesia

The End of Silence

Asian History

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The End of Silence

Accounts of the 1965 Genocide in Indonesia

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With original photography by Angus Nicholls

Amsterdam University Press

Cover image: Ika Setiati (niece of Sriyono Wiwoho), holding photos of her lost parents
(Asmoro Rahman Hadi and Rahayuni)

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*This book is about the memories of the 1965-1966 genocide in Indonesia.
Because I am trying to prevent another genocide: the genocide of Memories.*

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Apology

I have to apologise to my mother for writing this book. She has made me promise many times not to reveal anything about our family's background, and nothing about 1965-1966 in Indonesia – and I broke this promise.

My mother's trauma of witnessing her husband being dragged from our home by Soeharto's troops, one day in 1966, makes her believe that silence is a virtue. I am almost the complete opposite. For her, I am just like a broken record: I cannot keep quiet. I believe that I have the responsibility to reveal these stories so that more and more people find out about what happened in Indonesia half a century ago: the horrific injustice which befell millions of people, the impact of which continues even now.

But my mother keeps calling my conviction reckless, thoughtless and dangerous for our family; and I considered her a coward. It was Joshua Oppenheimer's 2012 documentary film *The Act of Killing* which made me understand my mother's fear better. The pride of the thugs for having murdered the alleged communists and the immunity they still have in Indonesia are brought to 'reality' by this film. As I was watching these thugs expressing their hunger to attack ethnic Chinese, I sensed my mother's terror: 'That's what my mother has been so frightened of!' I knew why she prohibited me from writing or even thinking about these incidents. I understand. But at the same time, my desire to record witness accounts of this genocide grew stronger.

For a while, I was in a conflict between my desire to respect my mother's wishes and my need to speak up by revealing the life stories of the people victimised by this atrocity. Between being a good daughter and a good activist, I decided to choose the second.

Many people have been very helpful in this project, especially all of my respondents and their families. I thank Joshua Oppenheimer for his incredible support. Saskia Wieringa, Darriel Jeffree, Maria Bikos, Robert Gillett, Andrew Conroe and Ian Nicholls have provided useful suggestions. I am grateful to all of my friends in Indonesia whose names I cannot mention one by one. Special thanks goes to Nada Holland, and I am always grateful to Angus Nicholls for his love and support.

I have many people to thank, but I know I will hurt one person who I really love by writing this manuscript. For this reason, this book has no acknowledgement but only an apology.

Timeline: Indonesia, 1965-1967

1965

- 1 October Dawn: six top generals of the Indonesian Army and one aide are kidnapped from their homes and murdered.
7.15 am: The radio announces that the murders were a pre-emptive act to prevent a coup against President Sukarno and that the Revolutionary Council is in control of the country.
2 pm: The radio announces that Sukarno is no longer in power.
7 pm: Soeharto announces that he now controls the Army and claims that the Revolutionary Council had tried to seize power from Sukarno.
- 3 October The bodies of the generals are discovered in a disused well at Lubang Buaya in Jakarta.
- 4 October Autopsy of the generals, with Soeharto present.
- 5 October Burial of the generals. Propaganda against the PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia, or the Communist Party of Indonesia) and the left-wing women's organisation Gerwani (Gerakan Wanita Indonesia, or the Indonesian Women's Movement) begins to spread widely in the mass media. It is reported that the six generals and one aide have been mutilated and sexually abused by the women of Gerwani.
- 8 October PKI offices in Jakarta and other cities are burnt down.
- 18 October The mass murder of people associated with the PKI erupts across the country.
- 12 December President Sukarno tries to correct manipulated news about the communists, but to no avail.

1966

- 11 March Sukarno signs the presidential decree called Supersemar,¹ the original of which is lost. Soeharto's followers claim that this document contains an agreement to transfer power from Sukarno to Soeharto.

¹ Supersemar is a document signed by President Sukarno that allegedly gave authority to Soeharto to take whatever measures necessary to restore order during the 1965-1966 chaotic incident.

12 March Using the Supersemar, Soeharto starts expelling Sukarno sympathisers from the parliament and the military, and accuses them of being communists.

1967

12 March Soeharto is appointed Acting President. He is then appointed President on 27 March 1968. He continues in power until 1998.

The Mutation of Fear

The Legacy of the Long-Dead Dictator

The Beginning

Studying mammals' fear in relation to their defence mechanisms, Arne Öhman and Susan Minerka argue: 'Early and reliable recognition of the predator is a prerequisite for effective defense.'² Fear is part of mammalian evolution, and an important factor in survival. For this reason, the deployment of terror can be an effective means of dictating people's behaviour. When people are overwhelmed by fear, they tend either to be in paralysis, to fight, or to take flight. The response can be shaped by how people read the situation and, as such, this had been used by Soeharto to dictate the Indonesian public's reactions to his advantage.

The use of fear as a key strategy in politics is nothing new: the despotic methods of discipline and punishment supported by law are generally the key factors used by totalitarian regimes. However, as I was gathering the personal stories of the 1965 victims, it was not the law that most of my respondents were worried about; rather, personal reasons (such as pressure from families and relatives not to speak out) were of more concern. I will explain this in more detail below. Indonesia is one example of a nation in which the use of fear is so effective that it has become like a very dangerous virus that mutates, and in the end comes to be accepted as 'natural' by many people.

Almost like fear, viruses are unseen and most people are only aware of them because of public information. Soeharto and his allies implanted fear as widely as possible not only in the victims, but also in the perpetrators and at all levels of society. The murder of the generals at dawn on 1 October 1965 was used by Soeharto to start a rumour that the communists were responsible for this incident. Accounts about the brutality of the communists as well as about the sadistic promiscuity of the members of Gerwani (Gerakan Wanita Indonesia, or the Indonesian Women's Movement) were spread widely in order to arouse public fear. Gerwani was aligned with the PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia, or the Communist Party of Indonesia). Through these means, Soeharto and his allies effectively portrayed the communists and their allies as 'monsters'. This in turn inspired an irrational fear so that

2 Öhman and Mineka, p. 486.

Soeharto's troops could easily gain not only public approval but also support in conducting their mission in exterminating people considered to be on the political left in Indonesia.

Their strategy was so effectively sustained that fear has become so powerful and is seen as ubiquitous, accepted and undetected. This is what I call the 'mutation of fear'. In this situation, many former victims have been transformed into agents that preserve the very ideology that has persecuted them. It is no surprise that long after Soeharto died, the most persistent resistance that many of my respondents had to face in revealing the truth about their family histories came from members of their own families who had themselves been victims of the 1965 atrocities.

The Creation of Fearful Memories

The bloodbath of communists and left-wing sympathisers in Indonesia was triggered by the murders of seven high-ranking generals in 1965. What has come to be known as the 30 September Movement in fact happened early in the morning of 1 October. At around 3 am, the troops under the leadership of Lieutenant Col. Untung left their bases to kidnap seven high-ranking generals: General Ahmad Yani, Major General M.T. Haryono, Brigadier General D.I. Panjaitan, Major General Suprpto, Major General S. Parman and Brigadier General Sutoyo. General Nasution, who was the seventh target, managed to escape by jumping over the wall of his house into the garden of his neighbour, the Iraqi ambassador. He hid there and was safe. However, his young aide, Lieutenant Pierre Tendean, was shot by mistake. A total of six generals and one aide were shot, and Nasution's five-year-old daughter, Ade Irma Nasution, was also accidentally shot and died a few days later. The corpses of the generals were dumped in a well in Lubang Buaya, East Jakarta.

The radio that day broadcast confusing and even conflicting accounts, creating a muddle that would from then on come to mark Indonesian history. At around 7 am, the state radio network RRI (Radio Republik Indonesia) broadcast the news that Untung's troops had prevented a plot led by the 'Council of Generals' against Sukarno. The announcement confirmed a rumour that had, in various forms, been circulating since 1961: that Sukarno's army chiefs, led by Nasution, had established the Council of Generals, which, with CIA support, sought to topple the President. This rumour had been particularly strong in the months immediately before the murder of the generals. In response, the radio on 1 October claimed

that Lieutenant-Colonel Untung had conducted a *pre-emptive action*, and it reported that a 'Revolutionary Council' had been formed that day to handle the situation. The Revolutionary Council demanded that the media and mass organisations be loyal, and the radio also stated that the murder of the generals was an internal army affair.

However, at 7 pm RRI announced that Soeharto was now in control of the army, and described the murder of the generals as an *anti-revolutionary* act. The Revolutionary Council, according to Soeharto, had not tried to protect the President, but to seize power from Sukarno and for this reason, the 30 September Movement, or G30S as it came to be known, had to be crushed. Because the strategic reserve commander General Ahmad Yani had been murdered, Soeharto was next in line in the hierarchy. He took command of the army, and by the evening of 1 October was evidently in control of the national radio. Soon after, those newspapers considered as left wing and/or pro-Sukarno were suppressed. All of the media were then brought under army control.

Soeharto ordered an autopsy of the generals, which was performed on 4 October. The bodies were buried the next day, 5 October, in the Hero Cemetery in South Jakarta. On that same day, the army newspapers started reporting the profoundly shocking news that the autopsy results showed that most of the generals had been severely tortured and mutilated before they died.³

So began an orchestrated campaign by Soeharto's army leadership to blame and vilify the PKI.⁴ On 8 October, the army and outraged members of the public burned down the PKI offices in Jakarta and in other cities, and the leaders of the party were hunted down. However, witnesses including Leo Mulyono, whose memoir can be found in this book, informed me that in Yogya, the anti-PKI propaganda started as early as 3 October 1965.

The slander and framing of the women's movement Gerwani for the murders started soon after the autopsy of the generals, mainly through the newspapers and radio. That October, articles started appearing with 'confessions' of Gerwani members, describing how these women had been present at Lubang Buaya on the night of the murders. They 'admitted' to dancing naked around the generals and torturing them, slashing and slicing the bodies of the generals, including their genitals, with razors and knives. The articles described the women as having celebrated the suffering of their victims, while at the same time conducting orgies with young communist

3 Anderson, pp. 110-111.

4 Vickers, p. 157; Wieringa, pp. 306-307.

men. This slander was successful in portraying the women of Gerwani as witches. After this spreading of fear about communism and its evils, more propaganda was still needed in order to motivate the public actively to persecute both real and perceived leftists in Indonesia.

Thus, between October and December 1965, newspapers including *Angkatan Bersendjata*, *Berita Yudha*, *Kompas*, *Duta Masyarakat* and many others propagated these reports. Gerwani women, it was now broadly assumed, had sexually abused and even mutilated the generals while dancing seductively to 'celebrate' their own brutality. The newspaper *Berita Yudha* quoted eyewitnesses who claimed that Gerwani women had cut the generals' genitals.⁵ The stories, as the historian Saskia Wieringa explains, 'struck chords with the Islamic fear of the uncontrolled sexual powers of women [...] and the male fear of castration'.⁶ As such, the rumour was extremely effective in stigmatising women and the left, and suited Soeharto's aim of taming unruly women. During Soeharto's governance, known as the New Order, the image of the submissive, obedient and religious woman was aggressively promoted, with the politically active, non-religious, critical and sexually overt Gerwani witch as a horrid deterrent.

The gruesome story of the torture was used to stigmatise the communists as well as to generate anger amongst the people. The description of communists as brutal and inhumane was designed to create terror amongst the people in preparation for the next stage: mass murder.

The Genocide⁷

At this stage, fear escalated to another stage: it was used to instigate action, to motivate the fight against the 'monstrous' PKI. Soeharto instructed the commander of the special forces, Sarwo Edhie, to lead the eradication of the PKI. Sarwo Edhie used the fear of the people to incite their anger and to encourage them to join the fight against those accused of being communists. Vilifying the victims was an important part of the perpetrators' strategy, so that they could construct their attack as a just war: a war to protect and defend. As can be read in the accounts of the victims and their families in

5 Drakeley, p. 13; Robinson, p. 293.

6 Wieringa, p. 295.

7 Although, according to the UN treaty, the term 'genocide' relates to national, racial, ethnic or religious groups, I want to add 'political affiliation' to this category. For this reason, I use this term to describe the massacre that occurred in 1965-1967 in Indonesia.

this book, the people who dragged these alleged communists from their homes and were implicated in their murder were not only members of the army or the police, but also civilians.

The combination of fear and authoritative approval for conducting violence incited many people in Indonesia to support and even take part in this bloodbath. In October 1965, an all-out hunt for communists and their sympathisers began. Sarwo Edhie was on the move with his special forces to murder left-wing sympathisers, and he encouraged the involvement of civilians in this bloodbath. Edhie explained: 'We gathered together the youth, the nationalist groups, the religious organisations. We gave them two or three days training, then sent them out to kill the communists.'⁸

Using religious groups, Soeharto's army found it easy to turn people against communists and left-wing sympathisers. In Java, the Islamic groups were actively involved in this mass murder, and in Bali, religious leaders organised the massacre. Ida Bagus Oka, a Balinese Hindu leader and Governor of Bali from 1988-1993 and instigator of the mass murder of the communists in Bali, states that there can be no doubt that 'the enemies of our revolution are also the cruellest enemies of religion, and must be eliminated and destroyed down to the roots'.⁹ With this kind of statement, he initiated a campaign of slander against the communists in order to ignite communal rage.

Rumours were then spread that the left wing had been planning a systematic extermination of non-communists.¹⁰ Fear can incite people to attack in panic, lest they be attacked themselves. Once fear had been aroused amongst certain groups of people in Indonesia, aggressiveness was easily stirred (indeed, aggressiveness is common in mammals that perceive themselves to be under threat), especially when there was a guarantee that acts that would normally be considered criminal were allowed and approved. The murder, lynching, raping and torturing of the communists was done in the name of self-defence, in anticipation of their enemies' attacks. The brutality against communists was no longer perceived as violence, but as a protective strategy, a vaccination. People were terrified, and this created a situation in which it was difficult for them to perceive other options. For people in fear will believe that they have been victimised and oppressed by the opponent, and the opportunity to attack the opponent is thus a form of release of emotion: it is seen to provide a freedom from fear

8 Hughes, p. 151.

9 Quoted in Robinson, pp. 299-302.

10 Farid.

and oppression, and ultimately a victory. Thus the story of Wayan Windra told in this volume depicts how, for the mob, attacking his 'red village' to slaughter the communists was in fact a celebration. For these attackers, their actions were a manifestation of their liberation, as well as a pretext for conducting atrocities without feeling guilty. The looting, ransacking and murdering by the attackers seemed to make them feel happy; for this violence was considered not as irrational aggression but as a reclaiming of their power and of their rights.

Witnesses I interviewed also said that if the propaganda failed to infuriate a mob the army had selected to attack the communists, threats were used instead: 'Your head or their head'. Fear had enabled the regime of Soeharto to eliminate its opponent, to create anger among significant parts of the populace, and to make them fight his enemy. The communists were so dangerous, the army claimed, that anyone who was not willing to get rid of them would endanger others and even their own families. Edhie himself boasted that about three million people were killed,¹¹ though the actual number of the people murdered in the massacre is unknown to this day. Fear had thus become part of social identity: it was fear of the communists that united the people to declare that 'we were not communists'. While the fear of communism led to the mass murder of both real and perceived leftists, the murders themselves in turn created a new and heightened sense of fear, so that most people were no longer able to think rationally about who were actually communists or what they had done to deserve such severe punishment. In this climate, individuals began to concentrate on how to please those in power so that they were considered 'good people' (meaning: non-communist people) in order to save themselves.

The CIA has called the 1965 genocide 'one of the worst mass murders of the twentieth century'.¹² However, the support of the CIA and of several Western governments for the massacre should not be underestimated. Sukarno, who was close to the PKI, was perceived as a thorn that had to be eradicated. As the Cold War reached its peak, one of the missions of the West was to remove him. By the mid-1950s, the American government started to worry about the growth of the Communist Party in Indonesia. By December 1954, the National Security Council of the United States decided that the

11 Permadi SH, at the seminar '50 Tahun Indonesia Merdeka dan Problem Tapol/Napol', 28 January 1995, cited in Wieringa, p. 344.

12 Central Intelligence Agency, p. 71n.

US government should make all efforts in order to prevent Indonesia from becoming a communist-oriented country.¹³

In fact, the support of the American government was crucial to the success of the genocide, as it was able not only to justify but also to legitimate the genocide via several channels. The American government did not only use journalists but also academics such as Guy J. Pauker (who taught at the University of California at Berkeley from 1956 to 1963 and became head of the university's Center for Southeast Asian Studies) to spread the news about the danger of communists. Pauker, who had close ties with the US military, urged his contacts in the Indonesian military to 'fulfill a mission' and 'to strike, sweep their house clean'.¹⁴

A more recent Berkeley scholar, Peter Dale Scott, has revealed the deception that the CIA and Pauker conducted in order to tarnish the left-wing sympathisers in Indonesia.¹⁵ Yet at the same time, the American government tried to project an image of detachment from what happened then in Indonesia. After his efforts to slander the communists in Indonesia, Pauker still expressed worries that his concern might not be shared as powerfully by others, as he was afraid that groups backed by the United States 'would probably lack the ruthlessness that made it possible for the Nazis to suppress the Communist Party of Germany'.¹⁶ However, the scale of the butchery from October 1965 until mid-1966 alone proved Pauker's apprehension to be unfounded, as hundreds of thousands had been murdered. At the end of October and in early November 1965, when the American embassy in Indonesia heard of the mass killing, their correspondence demonstrated that they expressed sympathy with what Soeharto's army was doing.¹⁷ The killings were seen as part of the strategy of spreading alarm and fear so that the communists would not recover as a political force: it was a strategy to treat them as a dangerous virus and to deflect attention away from the real problem or 'virus'. Fear was the virus being spread, but it was camouflaged in such a way that being frightened should be seen as natural. By stigmatising and demonising the enemy, the American government and its allies manufactured people's fear as a necessity to survive (to protect themselves against the threat). As such this is an effective strategy to spread communal fear, as the society would treat it not as fear but as the "awareness" of a

13 Kolko, p. 173.

14 Pauker, pp. 222-224.

15 Scott, pp. 1-12.

16 Chomsky, p. 122.

17 Kolko, pp. 181-182.

threat. In other words, the people were to poison themselves with the virus of fear, so that they could become the tools of the people in power without being aware of it.

The British government also conducted similar propaganda efforts in support of the 1965 bloodbath. On 5 October 1965, the British political adviser to the commander-in-chief in Singapore sent a message to the Foreign Office in London:

We should not miss the present opportunities to use the situation to our advantage [...] We should have no hesitation in doing what we can surreptitiously to blacken the PKI in the eyes of the army and the people of Indonesia.

The Foreign Office agreed with the recommendation.¹⁸ On 8 October 1965, the British Foreign Office sent a message to Singapore that encouraged the anti-communist propaganda:

Our objectives are to encourage anti-Communist Indonesians to more vigorous action in the hope of crushing Communism in Indonesia altogether, even if only temporarily, and, to this end and for its own sake, to spread alarm and despondency in Indonesia to prevent, or at any rate delay, re-emergence of Nasakom Government [government including the PKI] under Sukarno.¹⁹

The support for the brutal genocide in Indonesia was also expressed by the Australian Prime Minister, Harold Holt, who commented in the *New York Times*: 'With 500,000 to one million Communist sympathizers knocked off, I think it is safe to assume a reorientation [in Indonesia] has taken place.'²⁰ For these Western governments, the tragedy suffered by millions of innocent people in Indonesia meant the beginning of the Western victory over communism. The massacre of communists by Soeharto and his henchmen was thus actively supported by these powers and greeted by them with ill-disguised delight. These forces therefore also have an interest in ensuring that Soeharto's version of history is preserved.

The strategy of the red scare in the United States was imported to Indonesia. In the cultural sector, the chaos had a huge impact and Soeharto

¹⁸ Curtis, p. 394.

¹⁹ PRO DEFE 25/170.

²⁰ Raymont.

used the arts to implement and spread his propaganda. Artists who were members of the progressive union Lekra (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat, or the Institute for the People's Culture) were considered communist supporters. A 1959 Lekra document had proposed social realism for the arts and demanded that artists be political. Yet many members were not involved with the PKI and were not all political. Nevertheless, they were hunted down and murdered or imprisoned. Indonesia's foremost author, Pramoedya Ananta Toer (known as Pram), was tortured, held prisoner for fourteen years on Buru Island and banned from writing. He was allowed to write again in the years prior to his release, however, he was not provided with sufficient paper or ink. Surprisingly, in 1978, a year before Pram was released, his book written on Buru Island was published and distributed in small numbers. How did this happen? The account in this book of Oei Hiem Hwie, who helped Pram with his writing on Buru, will help to solve the puzzle.

Gerwani

The slander against the Gerwani women also supported the instillation of fear. Gerwani was originally founded as Gerwis in June 1950. In 1954, Gerwis changed its name to Gerwani and established a close link to the PKI. The aim of Gerwani was to promote gender equality and to advocate for women's issues in Indonesia. Under Sukarno's Guided Democracy, Gerwani leaned increasingly towards the PKI and Sukarno's interests and its focus shifted more onto economic and political issues rather than feminism. Due to its affiliation with the PKI, Gerwani membership numbers increased significantly. By 1965, Gerwani claimed to have around three million members.²¹

The fabrication of what the Gerwani women did to the generals was effective in supporting the view that the communists and their sympathisers were anti-religious and malicious creatures, and thus the witch hunt against these women became a 'sacred' duty to protect the country. Tens of thousands of Gerwani members were murdered or disappeared, with many more being imprisoned. Saskia Wieringa's interviews with ex-Gerwani members show that many spent up to fourteen years in prison. They were also raped by the army and brutally tortured.²² Many of them had their genitals torn by broken bottles.

²¹ Wieringa, p. 140.

²² Wieringa, pp. 196-246.

The Indonesia specialist Benedict Anderson, who managed to get hold of the forensic experts' reports of 5 October signed by Soeharto, confirmed that the generals were never tortured or mutilated,²³ and thus Gerwani was evidently not involved in the coup. His article 'How Did the Generals Die?' reveals the blatant lies spread by Soeharto and the Indonesian mass media concerning the 1965-1966 purge.

However, Anderson's writing did not make much impact in Indonesia. The public's memory had already been shaped and the propaganda of Soeharto had permeated too deeply to be affected. Too many people had been involved in this atrocity: the crime was communal, so that they would rather not listen to another version of history. Most Indonesians have been in a pact with Soeharto, and when people are frightened or under threat, they will tend to seek refuge in a stronger party or authority. After Soeharto was able to convince many Indonesians that communists were the threat, and involved many civilians in violent attacks against the communists, those involved would also need to flee from their crimes. They would need protection either from communists seeking revenge or from being held accountable for the atrocities they carried out against the communists, or from both. They would need assurance, not only that their rights remain protected but also that their efforts are rewarded. Meanwhile, others who were not involved in the violence were often overwhelmed by uncertainty about the future after a brutal bloodbath and confusing news. Ignorance, in this case, is an essential ingredient in maintaining public fear.

The more widespread fear is, the more it will be embraced by the people as something natural. In this situation, the authoritarian government could gain more support, as the people viewed themselves as being under threat from another power: it was easier for the elite to create the figure of a 'Leviathan' (a powerful ruler with absolute sovereignty). The process of inducing fear prepared the people to accept such a ruler. The ruler was no longer the one who spread fear but the one who protected and saved the people from it: the one with the antidote.

Soeharto's Version of History

Thus, the Leviathan was born: Soeharto. The use of fear continued. Soeharto manipulated the people to despise the communists, and many joined in the mass attacks and even in the mass murder of the people accused of being

23 Anderson.

communists. By employing fear, Soeharto had been able to get rid of the previous President Sukarno and place his cronies in power. To maintain his power, he had to maintain the fear. For this reason, the government of Soeharto wrote its own version of history. Though the murders happened on 1 October, they chose a day earlier. The Indonesian for 30 September Movement is Gerakan Tiga Puluh September, which allowed them to come up with the acronym GESTAPU, probably so that people would associate it with the terror of the Nazi Gestapo.

To sustain the horrific memories of communism, monuments and museums were built to portray its evil. At Lubang Buaya, Soeharto built the large Sacred Pancasila²⁴ Monument, which depicts the brutality of the communists and the sexual immorality of the Gerwani women. The dead generals were immortalised in large statues. The PKI Treason Museum was built in 1990 and contains 34 dioramas about the cruelty of the communists. In Yogyakarta (central Java), the monument *Yogya Kembali* was also dedicated to eternalising Soeharto's version of history. The monument and museum are full of warnings about the purported chief threat to the nation: the latent danger of communism.

Although Soeharto's troops had murdered millions of communists, to maintain his power he had to persist in demonising his victims. This use of fear was part of a deliberate attempt to silence the victims and their families, while also leading the populace to believe that the Leviathan Soeharto was still very much needed by the country. This national identity, born out of fear, had to be maintained, and thus the crucial distinction between communist and non-communist was emphasised over and over again during the Soeharto period. Former political prisoners were treated like virus carriers who were liable to spread their 'infection' to their families and the next generation. Thus, anyone who intended to work as a civil servant had to undergo a screening process to prove that they were from a 'clean environment' (not related to any political prisoner). The victims' evil was thus perpetuated, and by stigmatising the members of their families, Soeharto tried to impede any rebellion or vengeance in relation to the atrocities of 1965.

Soeharto's campaign against the communists permeated almost every aspect of Indonesian life. Even school textbooks were full of descriptions of the communists' cruelty. The categories 'communist' and 'atheist' became synonymous, and both groups were seen as betraying Pancasila, Indonesia's founding principles. Many of the films produced during this period also describe the evil cunning and immorality of the communists, and school children were urged to watch them, with tickets being sold in schools. But none

24 The state ideology and philosophy.

of these films had the same brainwashing power as the 'documentary' film *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* (The treason of G30S/PKI), a 1984 film sponsored by Soeharto. The words G30S and PKI are connected in the title, to marry the communists to the murders of the generals. Running for about four hours, the film depicts scenes of communists killing Muslims in the midst of their prayers, murdering generals in front of their families and Gerwani women slicing the generals while dancing seductively. School children were required to watch this traumatising film, and it was broadcast every year on 30 September until the end of Soeharto's reign. Interestingly, although the film indoctrinated generations, it incited *others* to talk about what *really* happened. An example in this book is Kusuma Wijaya's account: it was this very film that made his father reveal the family's secret history in relation to the 1965 tragedy.

During the governance of Soeharto, the survivors' identity cards also had to be branded with ET (*Eks Tapol* or 'ex-political prisoner'). This stigma was carried by their husbands, or wives, their siblings, children and grandchildren, including those who were born long after the tragedy happened. Those branded as ET, as well as their family members, could not attend state schools and universities or work as civil servants, and generally private companies did not want to employ them for fear of repercussions for supporting these 'communist' people. They also had to fulfil many requirements, such as reporting to the army and/or to local officials, attending dogmatic seminars and trainings, etc. The ET brand was only removed during the governance of Abdurrahman Wahid in 2000. Wahid also made a public apology to the victims, but he was quickly overthrown in July 2001. The long-term negative effects of the tragedy live on. The mass murder is still believed by many to have been a healthy process of eradication that the nation had to undergo.

After such a long period of terror, many have moulded themselves into whatever the regime wanted them to be. The New Order government was so successful and powerful that the repression had become a 'prerequisite' to be considered human. Many had to collaborate with those in power by denying their own convictions, and some even had to be the carriers of the New Order ideology, for they had no choice. For their families to be safe, the only way for them was to obey.

Who Was the Mastermind?

The head of the troops that murdered the generals, Untung, was executed on 7 March 1966, but there was no proof that Untung was the mastermind

of the murder of the generals. So, who actually engineered the murder of the generals on 1 October 1965?

In *A Preliminary Analysis of the Coup Attempt of the October 1, 1965 Coup in Indonesia*, published in 1971, the American historians Benedict R. O'G. Anderson and Ruth T. McVey claim that the murder of the generals was an internal army affair. The aim was to remove members of the Indonesian army elite who had worked with the CIA. The PKI and Sukarno were presented as scapegoats for this incident. Anderson and McVey reason that the PKI had been enjoying close relations with Sukarno, so that it would have been more beneficial to maintain this bond than to rebel against him.²⁵ Harold Crouch in his book *The Army and Politics in Indonesia*, also considers the movement an internal military affair, but suspects that the PKI was deeply involved.²⁶

The Marxist historian W.F. Wertheim, by contrast, concludes that Soeharto was behind the plot, as the murders enabled him to take control of the army and dismiss the PKI.²⁷ The historian Saskia Wieringa does not agree that Soeharto was the mastermind but writes: 'Soeharto was both ruthless and very ambitious, and was able to wait patiently for the right moment to strike.'²⁸

In his *Pretext for Mass Murder*, John Roosa also argues that there is no proof that Soeharto was involved in the murder of the generals. Roosa concludes that a section of the PKI leadership was involved. This was, however, used by Soeharto as a pretext for the massacre of millions of people with the aim of suppressing Indonesian communism, toppling Sukarno and seizing power.²⁹

President Sukarno tried to correct Soeharto's anti-PKI propaganda on 12 December 1965, by stating that the result of the autopsy of the generals' bodies showed no mutilation or sexual abuse. But it was too late: the mass murders had already begun. Only the mainstream newspaper *Sinar Harapan* published Sukarno's statement, but the same newspaper, a few days later, published accounts of the debauchery and immorality of the PKI, as if denying Sukarno's statement. By then it was clear that Soeharto's path to power lay open.

25 Anderson and McVey.

26 Crouch.

27 Wertheim.

28 Wieringa, p. 293.

29 Roosa, *Pretext*.

On 11 March 1966, it was reported that Sukarno, in signing the Supersemar document, gave full authority to Soeharto to take whatever action Soeharto deemed necessary to secure the safety of the nation. The original of this letter is, however, lost, and its contents are still debated. Sukarno withdrew from power on 12 March 1966 and was put under house arrest. This was the start of Soeharto's reign, which would last until May 1998.

People still wonder at how easy it was for Soeharto to get rid of Sukarno, without much of a challenge from the troops who were still loyal to Sukarno. Why did Sukarno's troops not fight Soeharto? The chapter about Kristianto Budi, whose father was one of those army officers loyal to Sukarno, addresses these questions.

When the Victims Remain Evil

Many of the perpetrators of the 1965 genocide acquired high posts in the New Order government, and even now are still close to high officials, so that their activities and businesses are protected. They still boast about the murders they were involved with in 1965-1966, as can be viewed in Joshua Oppenheimer's recent film *The Act of Killing* (2012), which takes place mainly in Medan, North Sumatra. At some point, these mass murderers even seem to be involved in what looks like a bragging competition in describing their 'bravery' in one of the biggest episodes of mass murder in human history: they are sure (or want to be sure) that their victims were traitors who deserved to be eradicated. These mass murderers also admit that they drank the blood of their victims, as they believed that this would give them the strength to kill and prevent them from going insane. Oppenheimer's film demonstrates that the power of the New Order ideology still reigns and that the victims of the genocide remain demonised and stigmatised.

The mass murderers perpetuate their legacy by maintaining the organisations Pemuda Pancasila (Pancasila Youth) and FAKI (Front Anti Komunis Indonesia, or the Indonesian Anti-Communist Front), which continue their propaganda of defending the Indonesian philosophy Pancasila by asserting the need of their presence to tackle the threat of communism. Thus, the fear of communism is maintained so that these people can keep acting as heroes who saved the country, with an easy target – because the enemies have never been allowed to adequately defend themselves. The right of Pemuda Pancasila and FAKI to bully, intimidate and even to loot 'these communists' is still granted.

Many of these mass murderers are family men and appear to be ordinary people, as shown by Oppenheimer's film. This has led to several critics equating the criminals' behaviour with Hannah Arendt's theory of the 'banality of evil'.³⁰ In her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963), Arendt writes about one of Adolf Hitler's henchmen who was responsible for the murder of millions of Jews: 'The deeds were monstrous, but the doer ... was quite ordinary, commonplace, and neither demonic nor monstrous.'³¹ Arendt argues that Eichmann was somehow not capable of thinking independently. It was thoughtlessness that drove him, as the evil was so effectively normalised that its perpetrator did not recognise the cruelty of his deeds. It was his unawareness of this evil that made him able to commit such a monstrosity. The evil was so banal, that Eichmann had no capacity for reflection on the evil he had perpetrated.

This seems to be what we find in *The Act of Killing*, as some of the assailants at first seemed very excited about Oppenheimer's project, claiming to know the 'truth' and that this history should be revealed, so that young people would not forget the past. The 'truth' for them is their sustained heroism and the sustained slander and defamation of the so-called communists, their families and even descendants. It is these mass murderers who often exclaim about the evil and menace of their victims, to justify what they have done and to perceive themselves as heroes who conquered evil. However, are all of these murderers driven merely by the banality of evil? After all, people do have choices, although some may not be as beneficial for them as others. It was also the choice of Kristianto Budi's father, the former vice-commandant of an Indonesian army battalion, to be loyal to Sukarno that sent him to prison.

Oppenheimer has admitted that he gained the trust of the perpetrators because he was American, and because the United States supported the anti-communist violence. As he states: "They loved American movies and Americans ... When I arrived, they just assumed, "Oh, this guy must love us." This leads me to wonder whether these people may have been at ease performing their unawareness (or denial) that they had committed crimes against humanity, precisely because they were being filmed by a perceived ally. Later in the film, the film's main protagonist, Anwar Congo, shows remorse as he becomes aware of Oppenheimer's true intentions. Was Anwar previously really unaware? Or has Anwar's awareness of Oppenheimer's political stance somehow led him to demonstrate his awareness and his

30 See Whittington; Bjerregaard.

31 Arendt, pp. 3-4.

remorse concerning the crimes that he had committed? After all, we represent ourselves differently to different people. It is a game of representation that everyone has to play, even with themselves.

The murderers can only live 'in peace' if they misrepresent themselves (even to themselves), thus they need to keep telling themselves that their deeds were heroic. Several times in the film, the mass murderers state that their intention to make the film is to be remembered as heroes by the next generations. Thus, for them, the construction of collective memories is important because they need assurance and reassurance of who they are.

Consequently, they have to maintain their conviction that their victims were not victims but defeated evildoers who would commit monstrous deeds again if given the chance. As such, it is important for the society and the country to agree with them, so as to portray these perpetrators' convictions as the 'truth'. In this way, the victims are not allowed to have their independent memories, for this would represent the possibility of questioning the murderers' version of history. To sustain the murderers' sense of righteousness, the victims must remain dehumanised – indeed, witnesses told me that the murderers used to refer to their victims as 'chickens'. Soeharto's strategy of hunting the families and descendants of the communists fits in with this dehumanisation: for this reinforces the conviction that the victims are of a different species.

It is no wonder that Joshua Oppenheimer's second film, *The Look of Silence* (2014), has been banned in Indonesia, because in it a victim, Adi Rukun, is given a platform, in order to tell of how his brother was butchered by anti-communist militias in Sumatra. The people involved in such mass murders are 'threatened' by their own shadows: they are not only frightened, but also paranoid, so that a simple thing such as a documentary film was able to trigger a huge reaction from them. To preserve their own self-image, these mass murderers also rely on the image of the victims, and to maintain a certain image it is necessary for the victims to remain losers: the genocide of the victims' memories is thus a must. Adi Rukun provides in this volume his own account of being the main protagonist depicted in Oppenheimer's film, as well as of the film's subsequent impact upon his life and that of his family.

The International People's Tribunal 1965

A group of Indonesians broke the silence surrounding the events of 1965-1966 by holding an international people's tribunal against human rights violations in Indonesia in 1965 – the International People's Tribunal 1965 (IPT 1965). Although not legally binding, the IPT 1965 was like a formal

court. It began as a community initiative brought about by people who felt that the government had created and sustained a culture of impunity surrounding the events of 1965-1966. The tribunal was supported by members of the Indonesian diaspora, who have more freedom to speak out about the issue. The organisers believed that it was too risky to hold the tribunal in Indonesia, so it took place in the Hague from 10 to 14 November 2015.

Most of the victims who agreed to become witnesses in the IPT 1965 had to give their testimonies from behind a curtain and to use pseudonyms. As the British coordinator of the IPT 1965, I attended these hearings and interviewed the victims. Those who decided not to reveal their identities in public often did this because of their families. One witness, Titin Rahayu (pseudonym), who was imprisoned, tortured and raped, for instance, said that originally she wanted to testify openly. However, after a talk with her family, she decided that it was better for her to testify behind the curtain. Similarly, Basuki (also a pseudonym), who was imprisoned on Buru Island, originally wanted to testify openly. However, his wife was too worried and persuaded him not to do this.

And it was not only those living in Indonesia who decided to use pseudonyms: two Indonesian exiles, one living in the Netherlands and the other in Bulgaria, also testified behind the curtain because they were worried about the impact that their testimonies might have on their families who live in Indonesia. Aminah (pseudonym), the woman who is now a Bulgarian citizen, also explained how several members of her extended family still cannot accept her even today. Despite the caution of these witnesses, their bravery in revealing what happened to them has alarmed several high officials in the Indonesian government as well as the New Order cronies.

Highly placed officials in the Indonesian government, such as Vice President Jusuf Kalla and Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs Luhut Panjaitan, openly condemned the IPT 1965. Luhut tried to intimidate the people involved in the tribunal by claiming that they were acting unlawfully and he stated that they would be detained. It is apparent that these officials were themselves frightened of what might happen if the survivors of 1965-1966 started speaking up and therefore issued the threats in order to silence them.

Real History and Memory: The 'Reality' of Oral History

My effort in collecting these accounts is a way of preventing the wholesale destruction of the memories of 1965-1966, especially because the stigma and fear are still alive and strong in relation to the incidents of 1965-1966.

First, I started to open up about myself. When Joshua Oppenheimer suggested to me in 2013 that I join him and fellow director Werner Herzog for an interview on National Public Radio in the United States and also for the *Wall Street Journal*, I told them openly about my father. I knew that if I revealed my family's past in public, it would give confidence to other victims and their families that their past was not something to be hidden. And if I opened up, the victims would trust me more and they would be willing to open up to me, too. Then, I made an announcement of my intention on Facebook and Twitter. I also approached several of my friends who I believed had been affected by this tragedy (from what they said, thought and wrote I could draw this conclusion). And most of the time, I was right. Although we might have been friends for a long time, we had kept quiet about our pasts in relation to 1965. My revelation about my family led to their revelations. Some of them, however, were not ready to go into detail about what had happened to their families because of the trauma associated with it.

In fact, by stigmatising the family members and descendants of former political prisoners, Soeharto was able to induce families to spy on each other, trying to find who had been on 'the list' and to spread fear even deeper. Because of this, a complete breakdown of familial trust is common amongst the family members of the victims. Sometimes I can sense a dynamic of hatred within a family, because they feel that whoever has been imprisoned has put the whole family at risk. People often blame anyone who can easily be blamed, rather than the real culprit. Soeharto's strategy was efficient in making the families of the 1965-1966 victims end up fearing and hating each other. Such sentiments are still alive and thriving, even now.

The stigma against ethnic Chinese also remains powerful. It is also an irony that while the genocide of 1965-1966 could not be separated from the long history of anti-Chinese sentiment in Indonesia, not many ethnic Chinese were willing to open up to me and take part in my project. Many of them (including my friends) told me that the risk was still too high for them. One of my friends, whose father was also imprisoned in 1965, told me: 'I am sorry, Soe Tjen. I only told you about my father, because you are one of my best friends; but never ever reveal it to anyone else.' In this book, besides me, there are only two other ethnic Chinese represented. One of them is Oei Hiem Hwie, who was imprisoned on Buru Island and decided to open up about his identity when he opened a public library. Another is a granddaughter of a PKI member, but she asked me to use pseudonym. Fear is still dominant amongst the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, and they are more worried about the stigma and repercussions of openly discussing the events around 1965-1966 compared with the people who are considered not

to be ethnic Chinese. Fear produced by the state and its apparatuses (the military, the paid gangsters) seems serious and obviously threatening, and has been discussed widely under the heading 'the politics of fear' by several academics and journalists. Nonetheless, there is another form of fear that is often more sustaining and has a more powerful impact on individuals: fear internalised within the family.

When state fear is domesticated, it becomes silent and usually unnoticeable. Nevertheless, half a century after the incidents of 1965-1966 and decades after the end of the New Order in 1998, it is this domesticated fear that is able to turn many people into agents of Soeharto: they teach their children to be afraid and to subject themselves to the New Order ideology. Several of the memoirs I have gathered depict how the parents ban their children from getting involved in politics or challenging the government; some siblings also asked their brothers or sisters not to get involved in my project, and some grandparents warned the family never to speak up. Many of these people who forbid others to speak up have been victims of the atrocities of 1965-1966. Out of fear, the victims have become the hands of the New Order regime, helping to sustain its ideology. The state has not even forbidden these people from writing, but the censorship is already there: internalised, psychologically embedded and personalised. Accordingly, most of my respondents had to negotiate with their own families before they were able to reveal the truth about their family histories. Fear is a very effective and inexpensive confederate for maintaining the power of despotic rulers.

Many people in Indonesia have passed the inheritance of fearful memories onto subsequent generations. Fear has become a meme – it has been transmitted through several channels, it has replicated and even mutated. When cancer cells mutate, they become more virulent and can conceal themselves better. So it is with fear. After their mutation, these cells usually move to a different part of the body, just as fear moves from the government apparatuses to the mouths of the victims and their families. This kind of mutated fear will then be camouflaged by different forms: it can appear as love, care, attention. Parents forbid their children from writing, because of their love for their children and out of concern for their safety: 'We don't want you to say anything in relation to what happened in 1965-1966, because we love you, because we are concerned about you'. When I asked a victim and his family whether they were afraid of talking about it, they answered: 'No, we are not afraid. But we just don't talk about it. It's in the past and we do not want to dig up old wounds. What for?' Fear has moved from the mouth of the government, to the mouths of the family members and has

thereby become ubiquitous. It is what you breathe: it becomes simply a matter of paying attention to your surroundings and of avoiding situations that put you at risk.

The people who make efforts to search and reveal the truth have become the ones who are seen to create trouble for wanting to talk about the 1965-1966 anti-communist purge. Several ethnic Chinese, for instance, said to me after finding out about my intention of writing this book: 'We are allowed to speak Mandarin now. We can celebrate Chinese festivals freely. You cannot expect the government to be perfect, but at least we do not have to worry too much now, so what more do you want?' Thus, it is not fear that makes them disagree with my writing this book, but they believe that I will disturb the 'peace' that they have been enjoying since Soeharto stepped down. However, behind this is actually the fear that what they experienced during Soeharto's period of rule may happen again, and I have become the potential source of their fear.

Soeharto died several years ago, but the terror continues in another form: anti-communism had become a way for the New Order cronies to sustain their power on a more general scale, and to intimidate the public so that the people will remain subservient. Meanwhile, the history textbooks in Indonesian schools are still full of manipulation about the 1965-1966 genocide. 'Official' accounts of what really happened in October 1965 do not exist. As such, written records have provided a limited space for the survivors and their families, as they have been stigmatised and many were hesitant to write, and those who are willing to publish their stories often find difficulties in finding publishers who are willing to publish their works.

In this discourse of repression and stigma against the victims, often anonymous oral history becomes an alternative for these survivors and their families to express themselves. While documents and written materials about this case are not only scarce but also subject to manipulation, oral history can provide information about 'ordinary' people in relation to the legacy of 1965-1966 in Indonesia. Vanessa Hearman, who conducted research on the use of oral narratives in researching the 1965-1966 massacres, states: '[P]risoner memoirs and oral testimonies dealing with the 1960s period in Indonesia can provide a counterpoint to the histories that have thus far been promoted by the New Order.'³²

Yet oral history is not free from problems, as it can raise questions about the reliability of the sources as well as their memories. Todd Brewster states that oral history has indeed been subject to doubt because an oral

32 Hearman, p. 38.

source 'however persuasive, inherently involves a certain vagueness and imprecision, for it is inevitably based upon memory – which over the years acquires hindsight'.³³ With so much historical confusion and manipulation in Indonesia, especially during the New Order, historical distance may give the respondents more clarity, as these events could only be discussed openly after Soeharto stepped down. Indeed, many of my respondents told me that as years went by, the events became clearer for them. Thus, there is a paradox here: the further one moves away from a certain event, the higher the risk that memories of that event will dissipate. Nevertheless, the distance also gives time for my respondents to hear and see their own histories in a wider scope so that they can place their memories within a clearer context. As events often relate to other events, this distance has given most of my respondents more data and a better perspective of what happened about fifty years ago.

Partiality, bias and imperfect memories are factors that are unavoidable in oral history, but written history can also be subject to similar inaccuracies. Moreover, as Indonesian history has demonstrated: written records have been constructed, manipulated and even forged. Consequently, oral narratives should never be dismissed, especially in a situation where the government is still repressive and the opportunity for publishing these memories is remote for many of these people. Indeed, Paul Thompson, one of the pioneers of oral history as a research methodology in the social sciences, writes that 'the use of interviews as a source by professional historians is long-standing and perfectly compatible with scholarly standards'.³⁴ To denounce or degrade the space in which the survivors and their families have the opportunity to narrate their pasts will only stigmatise them further.

From the testimonies of the survivors and the families of victims, the reader can see different perceptions and interpretations of the past. Yet, inaccurate perceptions cannot be equated with manipulation, and the stories in this book are not intended to present objective facts; rather, they show how historical facts about Indonesia are perceived by and have had an impact upon these respondents. This collection of their testimonies is just a small part of the fight against the obvious manipulation that the Indonesian government had conducted concerning the events of 1965-1966. The personal stories of these survivors and their families underscore the fact that historical falsification is completely different from interpretation.

33 Brewster, p. 76.

34 Thompson, p. 3.

It is from the personal stories of these 'ordinary' people whom I met that a new version of reality, a new history of the country, is emerging. History is often concerned with the ambitions of the powerful and tends to forget the people whose lives have been ruined by those ambitions, whose families have been victimised and traumatised for generations, and whose names may never be mentioned anywhere.

The people who share their memories in this volume are writing the 'real' history of Indonesia for me, for us – today.