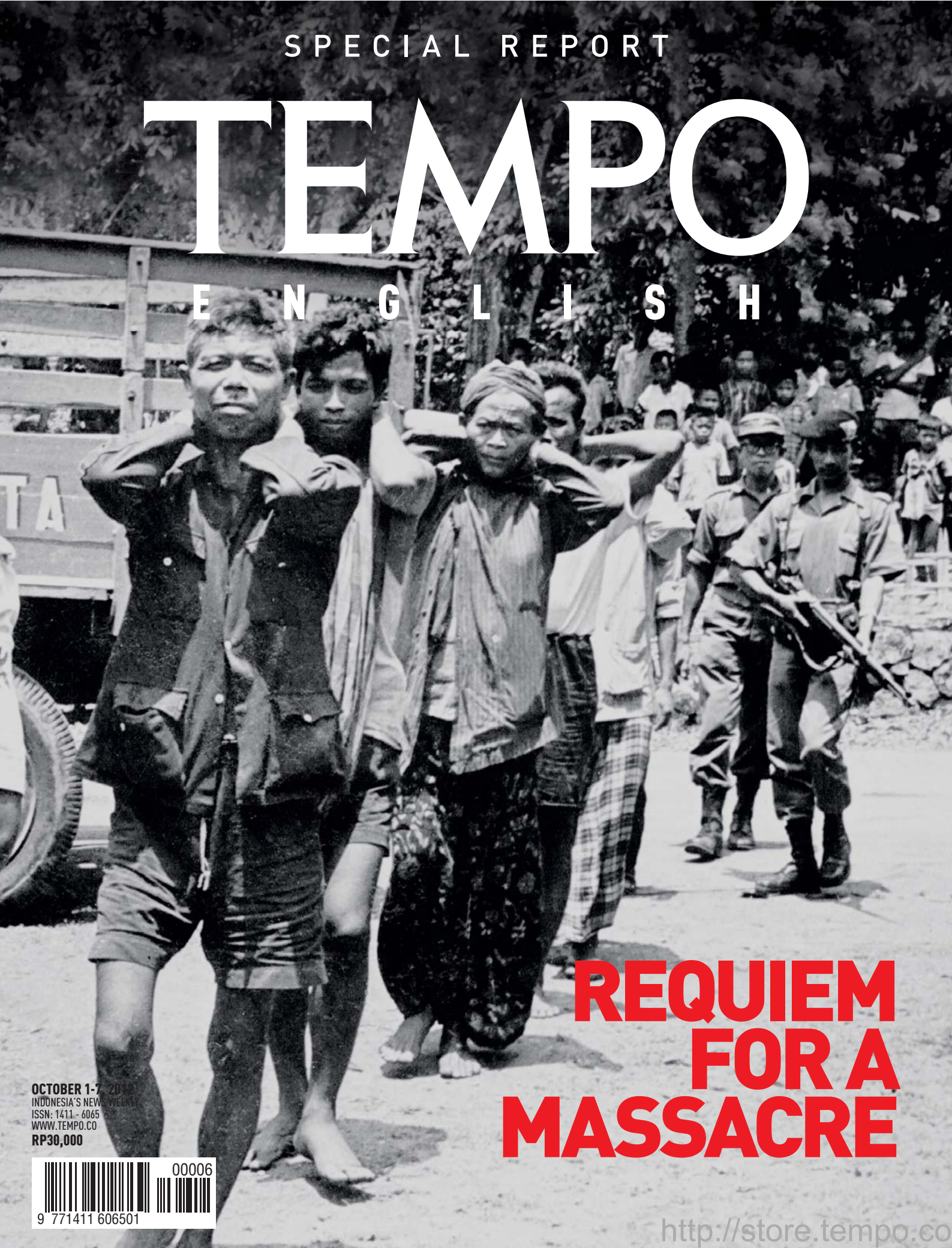


SPECIAL REPORT

# TEMPO

ENGLISH



## REQUIEM FOR A MASSACRE

OCTOBER 1-7, 2012  
INDONESIA'S NEWS WEEKLY  
ISSN: 1411 - 6065  
WWW.TEMPO.CO  
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## REQUIEM FOR A MASSACRE

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Cover: Several PKI members rounded up by soldiers in Central Java (1965).

Photo: National Library Collection

THE massacre of PKI members following the tragic events of 1965 has come back to haunt us with the screening of *The Act of Killing* by US filmmaker Joshua Oppenheimer. The movie features the chilling confession of Anwar Congo, who took part in the mass killings almost 50 years ago. In this special report, *Tempo* looks back at that dark period—Indonesia's own killing fields, the former concentration camps, and the grisly accounts of those who did the unthinkable.

### National Forced to Jump Ship

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THE dysfunctional relations between the KPK anti-graft commission and the police are entering a new phase. The two institutions are now fighting over the status of 16 investigators who form the backbone of the KPK. Eleven from the police have been recalled to headquarters and the others will follow. Can the KPK stay effective without adequate personnel?

### Outreach The Sacred Vow

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WHEN a marble mining company began drilling the sacred hills of Nausus and Anjaf in South-Central Timor regency, NTT province, Mollo tribal communities reacted. Led by a woman, they fought to expel these destroyers of nature. *Tempo* attended the Ningkam Haumeni annual festival last July and witnessed three tribes give a sacred oath to fight all forms of mining, their duty to preserve and protect the environment.

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## REQUIEM FOR A MASSACRE

**R**ECONCILIATION cannot begin with a denial, but with an admission. This is what we need to hear from the people responsible for the 1965 mass killings, and those who supported them. As in the phrase “truth and reconciliation,” the order of the words shows the first is a prerequisite for the second.

Forty-seven years have passed since members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and those accused of being affiliated with them, were massacred. Reconciliation is still far from a reality. What have lasted are the denials from the killers—and organizations such as the state security forces that supported the sadistic killings. That and the excuses that they were acting in self-defense, while warning of communism’s “latent danger” at the same time.

There is confusion over the precise number of victims. In December 1965, Sukarno established a fact-finding commission led by State Minister Oei Tjoe to seek the truth. Because of its limited freedom of action, and fear of the army’s reaction, the commission concluded that 78,000 people had been killed—a number believed to be too low. The report from the Restoration of Security and Order Command mentioned a figure of around a million deaths. According to the former commander of the Army Parachute Regiment, Sarwo Edhie Wibowo, around 3 million were killed. Liberal activists put the total at 2 million.

To quote Roger Cribb, the left exaggerated the scale of the slaughter to highlight the wrongs of those responsible. For opponents of communism, the high number shows the danger of the PKI, while a low figure understates its crimes. These denials seem to begin with the statistics.

Those wanting to learn the truth would do well to look at Joshua Oppenheimer’s film, *The Act of Killing*. Seven years in the making, it contains the confessions of a petty criminal who killed hundreds of PKI members in Madiun. His account reveals another motive of the killers: personal vengeance. As far as this thug, Anwar Congo, was concerned, PKI members had to die because they had banned movies from the West—a type of capitalism that had provided Anwar, a ticket scalper, a source of income for many years. Several other killers came up with the same old excuse: they killed to save the nation from the danger of communism.

In the climate of the New Order way of thinking, which had not



vanished from people’s minds, the apology offered by President Abdurrahman Wahid at the start of the reform era must be appreciated. As head of state and a senior religious scholar in the Nahdlatul Ulama, Gus Dur, as he was known, openly expressed his regrets. It is a shame that 13 years later, some NU *ulama* disapprove of such an apology. In fact, they have asked President Yudhoyono to follow their example. They took this stance after the National Human Rights Commission published the results of its investigation into the tragedy. The historical record shows that the NU as an organization played an active role in ‘cleansing’ Central and East Java of the PKI.

Despite the rejections, moves to heal the wounds of 1965 must continue. Establishing ad hoc courts to try those responsible—now aged or dead—will not be easy. The

reconciliation process, which will need new legislation, will probably take time, but it should not be forgotten.

An apology from the government would be a short-term solution. Regrets could be expressed in the form of appropriate compensation for the victims. We hope this move from the government would be emulated at the local level. After all, there have been signs, albeit a few, of forgiveness.

In Palu, Central Sulawesi, Major Rusdi Mastura officially and openly apologized to former PKI members. He promised the families of the victims free healthcare and scholarships. He also plans to build a monument on the site of a PKI forced labor camp. As a Muslim Advisory Council activist, he admits his organization was involved in the movement to crush the PKI.

Aside from this, there is no reason for us to fear communism. The ideology is long bankrupt. The Soviet Union is no more and China is now as capitalist as the United States. The idea of a classless society is an obsolete and futile utopia.

Therefore there is no longer any need for a ban on spreading communist teachings such as Marxism and Leninism. The Provisional People’s Consultative Assembly decree on this should be revoked. There must be no more bans on books about 1965—or anything else. What needs serious attention is the stigmatization of communism and its victims. The long-held belief that communism equals atheism is mistaken. In other words, there is no need to worry about communism, because as an ideology, it is really nothing special. ● FULL STORY PAGE 22

SPECIAL REPORT **1965**

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{ BURHAN ZAINUDDIN RUSJIMAN, 72 YEARS OLD }





▲  
PKI members and sympathizers rounded up in Bali.

**H**E was once a ticket scalper hanging around movie theaters in Medan. In the documentary film *The Act of Killing (Jagal)*, by American director Joshua Oppenheimer, screened at the Toronto Festival Film last September, he openly admitted to slaughtering hundreds of members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in Medan from 1965-1966.

Emulating characters he saw in American gangster films, he used a special technique, to prevent blood from spilling all over the ground, when he cut the throats of those he deemed guilty of being PKI people.

He had a pleasant personality. He loved dancing, bragging that he used to cha-cha when he struck to kill, and was an ardent fan of film stars Elvis Presley and James Dean. "I relished killing those PKI people," he said. In one scene, along with his fellow executioners in 1965, he was seen riding in a convertible down the streets of Medan. They were rem-

iniscing and driving by places where they had done some of their killing—among them a stretch of road where his victims were ethnic Chinese residents. "When I came across a Chinese, I would immediately stab them," he recalled.

The candid admission of this thug named Anwar Congo in this film, which will likely be shown by the National Human Rights Commission in Jakarta this October, is truly mind-blowing. He thinks he is a hero, a savior of the people. One report puts the number of people killed in the aftermath of 30 September 1965, close to 1 million people, mostly PKI members and sympathizers. And Anwar was only one of the executioners. There were many such 'Anwars' in other parts of the country. There can be no doubt, this is one serious case of gross human rights violation.

In this edition, *Tempo* attempts to see the events of 1965 from the perspective of the killers who felt they were on a special mission. We have no intention of condemning

or judging them. Indonesian politics at that time was extremely complex. Before the September tragedy, the conflict between the PKI and other political parties had reached boiling point. The PKI, feeling it had the upper hand, imposed various kinds of pressures on residents who remained 'apolitical' or not on board with them. When the situation was reversed, revenge and retaliation spun out of control. The killings were given tacit approval by both communal and religious leaders.

The period from 1965-1966 cannot be judged by today's norms and values. In reviewing Indonesia's darkest days, the relevant social, political and economic contexts must be taken into consideration.

Nevertheless, we understand the dilemma of this 'information asymmetry' out of the 1965 tragedy. At that time, all newspapers were controlled by the military. The public was 'indoctrinated' by continuous information that communists were the enemy of the state, identical with atheism. It was the

justification the executioners needed to carry out their killings. The military spread lists of PKI members who were to be eliminated. Later, the military protected these executioners, even supplying them with weapons. In some places, prison inmates were released to hunt down 'enemies of the state.'

History tends to repeat itself, both here and elsewhere. In Israel, Adolph Eichmann, who was once in charge of a Nazi concentration camp, was tried for the massacre of hundreds of Jews. He felt no guilt for his actions, because he felt it was his national duty. German philosopher Hannah Arendt, who followed the trial in 1963, wrote the famous book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report of the Banality of Evil*. Arendt saw that executors like Eichmann were not schizophrenics or psychopaths, but ordinary citizens who felt their actions were proper, because it was justified by the state. Arendt called this phenomenon acute shallowness.



IN tracking down the killing fields where PKI members were slain, we found that the massacres did not take place only in East Java, Central Java and Bali—places which have frequently been cited by researchers and the media. The killings also took place, for instance, in Sika, Flores, and on an island off Palembang in Sumatra. We met only a few of the executioners, since many of them had passed away. Those remaining who live to tell the tale are mostly in their 70s. Incredibly, they recounted their hair-raising experiences openly, articulately and seemingly with little feelings of guilt or remorse.

One of them explained that morality was relative. Killing is indeed forbidden, but that they did it to save people and their religion. Some have quietly realized the error of their ways. Anwar, who appears brutal in the film, admitted that from time to time, he would make a whispered oath, apologizing to the souls of victims.

According to film director Oppenheimer, during the making of his film, Anwar sometimes appeared to have regretted his actions. His feelings of heroism and guilt seemed to come into conflict.

Elsewhere, another executioner had to be locked up by his family, because whenever he recalls the killing, he would run out of the house, swinging a machete and a sickle.

In recalling this piece of history from the executioners' perspective, we can glean yet another aspect of the complex events surrounding the 30 September 1965 tragedy. As noted by Oppenheimer, the main problem in reconciliation is not

with the victims or procedural matters, but with the willingness of the killers to recognize that their deeds were wrong and evil. Often, however, their minds still retain the indoctrination hammered into them that their killings were justifiable.

A special note to our readers: our coverage was carried out with extreme care. We are aware that profiling executioners would be very sensitive. We remained true to journalistic procedures, verifying stories told by the executioners we interviewed. Through independent sources, we checked and rechecked to ensure they were indeed the perpetrators, or whether they were merely posturing. Without corroborating evidence, the person would be dropped from our list.

We value the privacy of our sources. For those who wished to remain anonymous, we have only identified them by their initials or provided them with an alias. We honor requests not to have photographs published. Those appearing in this special edition gave their full approval.

We have also visited concentration camps set up by the military after 1965. In addition to the infamous Buru Island, many suspected PKI members were held inside prisons at Plantungan, Central Java, or in Moncongloe, Maros regency, South Sulawesi. These places—to borrow the words of Russian writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who was once detained in a Russian concentration camp—were Indonesia's gulags. Although those places are now used for something else, their sad history still hangs in the air.

Readers, no matter how tragic and painful, the mass murders of 1965-1966 must, at one time or the other, be reexamined. Remembering, in the long run, is better than forgetting.

What happened in Palu, Central Sulawesi, can be taken as an example. The Solidarity Group for Victims of Human Rights Violations in Central Sulawesi found more than 1,000 people killed during the 1965-1966 period in that province. Not long ago, Rusdi Mastura, the mayor of Palu, publicly apologized to the families of the victims. He was 16 years old, a high school student, when the massacres took place. As a member of the Boy Scouts, he was ordered by the local school principal to guard detention sites around the city for about two months. He was affected by what he witnessed. Rusdi and Palu government officials promised to provide free healthcare to the families of the victims, scholarships for their children, and to erect a monument in what was once a PKI work camp.

Rusdi's act of contrition is a good model for closure.

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# FIELDS OF DEATH

The policy to eliminate members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and their sympathizers ignited a wave of killings that raged throughout Java and Bali, and later spread to other areas. Executioners emerged from nowhere, swinging their sickles, whether out of personal revenge, religion or a sense of duty to the state. They killed anyone labeled or suspected as a PKI member, disposing the bodies into ravines, rivers and caves. Did the executioners ever feel remorse or guilt over their horrifying actions?

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◀ **A member of Balinese Marhain** which is suspected of aiding the military in rounding up PKI members in Bali, 1965.

# THE MILITARY, STUDENTS, AND THE KEDIRI TRAGEDY

ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS, THE ANSOR YOUTH GROUP, AND THE MILITARY JOINTLY MASSACRED MEMBERS OF AND THOSE CONNECTED WITH THE PKI. THE ROOT OF THIS ENMITY BEGAN WITH EVENTS IN 1949.

**C**ARRYING a short sword, Abdul Malik led 100 Ansor youths on foot from the Kediri city square toward Burengan subdistrict. Their objective: the office of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), about 3 kilometers east of downtown Kediri. Brandishing various bladed weapons, they overran a dozen PKI administrators who were trying to defend their office, while others escaped to the north of the village. “We burnt down that office,” said this former commander of Ansor’s Platoon III in Kandat district, Kediri, recalling the events of October 13, 1965.

At his home last week, Abdul told *Tempo* that the events of that afternoon were the start of his work to eradicate PKI members in Kediri. Abdul’s group was not alone. There were dozens of other groups, consisting of students from several Islamic boarding schools and members of the Ansor and Banser (Ansor multipurpose unit), numbering in the tens of thousands. That day, they were all scouring the land for pockets of PKI followers in Kediri.

Before moving out, the crowd took part in a ready formation, held in the city square. The formation was led by Syafi’i Sulaiman and H Toyip, two well-known Nahdlatul Ulama (NU—the biggest Islamic organization in Indonesia) leaders in Kediri. “They said that the PKI had stepped all over Islam and wanted to eliminate Muslims from Indonesia,” said Abdul. On this basis, they gave strict instructions to those present: eradicate the PKI.

According to Abdul, the military played a

big part in holding that formation. The night before, Abdul saw some soldiers from the district military command visit the home of H Sopingi, an NU figure who lives in the Setonogedong subdistrict, Kediri, which is where they held the meeting to discuss the ready formation. Those soldiers from the military command asked that the formation be held at once, because the PKI was ready to attack Kediri.

Hermawan Sulistyono, author of the book *Palu Arit di Ladang Tebu (The Sickle among the Sugarcane Fields)*, said that the morning formation was initially the request of commander of the 16th Infantry Brigade, Colonel Sam to the NU chairman in Kediri. This request was also an explicit expression of military support for the NU to take action. In fact, Sam gave a Luger to the Ansor chairman in Kediri and trained him how to shoot at Mount Klotok, a small mountain, west of Kediri. In addition to being approved by the prominent NU *kiai* (religious teacher), the formation was attended by figures outside of the NU. The then regent and the commander of the Kediri Military District Command arrived and made some remarks.

That event was the beginning of the elimination of PKI members and those believed to be sympathizers of the PKI in Kediri. Open, large-scale massacres took place for several months in all areas of the town known for its tofu production. One well-used killing spot was the *gisikan* or along the banks of the Brantas River, which runs through Kediri. The heads of the victims were cut off and thrown into the river.

It is suspected that Kediri was the larg-



est killing field in East Java. There is no definite figure about the number of the massacre victims at that time. However, since the elimination operation began, the Brantas River had become a floating graveyard. Most of the time, headless bodies floated in the river, emitting a foul odor. No one wanted to catch fish or eat fish out of that largest river in East Java.

The largest number of PKI detainees in East Java were in Kediri. Based on data from the Directorate of Social and Political Affairs of East Java province in 1981, the number of detainees connected with the PKI who were released and required to report in, totaled 446,803 in East Java. Of these, 83,800 were from Kediri.

...

SINCE that attack in Burengan subdistrict in mid-October, Abdul led the Ansor of Kandat to eradicate the PKI for the next months. He said the action had the full support and protection of the military. One time their group was overwhelmed when





gional Military Command.

The administrator of the Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School, Kiai Idris Marzuki, speaking to *Tempo* last September, said that at that time an officer from the Regional Military Command informed Kiai Makhrus that the PKI would attack Kediri on October 15, 1965, and that the Lirboyo school was the main target. To better convince Kiai Makhrus, the officer showed him some holes like wells which had been dug in the sugarcane area around the Lirboyo school. He said that the PKI made those holes for the dead bodies of the students and kiai in Lirboyo, whom they planned to massacre.

In short, Kiai Makhrus believed him, especially since Kiai Makhrus was very close to the Regional Military Command (Kodam), even as far back as the time of the struggle for national independence. Kiai Makhrus mobilized the school to fight the colonizers. He was also a member of the Brawijaya Kyai-Kodam Forum, which was a communication vehicle between the Kodam and the Islamic boarding schools in East Java. “The pain of the Kodam is the pain of Kiai Makhrus,” said Kiai Idris, describing how close Kiai Makhrus was with the Kodam back then.

Kiai Makhrus, who is also the Suriah chairman of the East Java NU, then instructed the students to get ready. All of the adult students were trained in Indonesian martial arts and instructed in powers of invincibility from the school’s administrators and fighters. The Lirboyo school was known for having many skilled martial art followers.

Kiai Idris and Maksum Jauhari, who was better known as Gus Maksum, divided the work. Kiai Idris was responsible for maintaining security in the school and ensuring that the student study process was not disturbed. Gus Maksum led the elimination of PKI members. Large-scale mobilization of students was done in Lirboyo. About half of the 2,000 or so boarding school students took part in killing PKI members.

According to Zainal Abidin, a nephew of Gus Maksum, Gus Maksum often talked about his exploits in killing the PKI. Said Zainal, Gus Maksum never used a weapon. Working empty-handed, he was able to overcome every opponent. The son of Kiai Jauhari, the administrator of the Al-Jauhar Islamic Boarding School in Kanigoro, was

they faced PKI members in Batuaji village, Kediri. Because the PKI mass outnumbered them, Abdul asked for help from the district military command. Soon after, a number of soldiers arrived with armored vehicles to assist.

Furthermore, each night a military truck came to Abdul’s house to hand over PKI members to be executed. “The TNI (Indonesian Military) captured them, while we were the executioners,” he said. “It was like the TNI *nabok nyilih tangan* (using the hands of others to punch).”

As they were taken off the truck, the ‘shipment’ from the district military command was taken to the public graveyard in Sumberejo village, near Abdul’s house, to be ‘schooled’—a term used at that time to mean they would be killed. “Their numbers varied. From 4-17 each night,” Abdul recalled.

None of the victims resisted at the time of their execution. Even so, sometimes it was not easy to kill them. “Some of them had powers of invincibility,” he said. One

▲ **Sumberejo Kandat cemetery, the massacre site of PKI members and sympathizers.**

time when swinging a small sword, or even a large machete, Abdul’s man was unable to wound the body of one PKI member. Finally one Ansor member suggested hitting him with a rattan stalk engraved with the word God or a supplication recited on it by a kiai. This proved effective, and the PKI member collapsed before finally being hacked by several people.

...

IN EARLY October 1965, religious studies at the Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School, Kediri was suddenly disturbed. Kiai Makhrus Aly, the administrator of that largest boarding school in Kediri, said that a large PKI mass was about to attack Kediri. Kiai Makhrus got this information on the planned PKI attack from the Brawijaya Re-

known for having high powers of invincibility. It was also due to his fighting skills that Gus Maksum was entrusted with commanding the operation. In addition to the students, the Banser and the martial art followers in Kediri were under his command. "In addition to the students, Gus Maksum called on the skilled martial practitioners from outside the boarding school to join in the eradication," he said.

According to Kiai Idris, the military was indeed behind this tragedy. The Kodam even sent troops in civilian clothing to Lirboyo. The military picked up and transported students in military trucks to send them to pockets of PKI members who were the targets of operations in all areas of the Kediri Residency. In the field, the military placed the students on the front lines and made them the executioners.

Nevertheless, Kiai Makhrus had his limits. He banned the students from killing PKI sympathizers who lived around Lirboyo. The reason was that he did not want any bloodshed to take place among students who lived around the school, many of whom at that time were affiliated with the PKI. "So the killing around the school was done by the TNI," said Kiai Idris.

...

THE events of January 13, 1965, at the Al-Jauhar Islamic Boarding School in Kanigoro village, are still firmly in the memory of Masdoeqi Moeslim. On that day, at 4:30am, he and 127 participants in mental training were reading the Qur'an and getting ready for the early morning prayer. Suddenly about 1,000 PKI members carrying various bladed weapons attacked. Some of them entered the mosque, taking Qur'ans and putting them in sacks. "Then they were thrown in the yard of the mosque and trampled on," Masdoeqi told *Tempo* at his home in Ngadiluwih, in Kediri, last week.

The training participants gathered in front of the mosque. "I saw that weapons were affixed to all of the committee mem-



**ABDUL** AND THE OTHER ANSOR MEMBERS FELT EVEN MORE CERTAIN THAT WHAT THEY DID WAS RIGHT. "LIKE POURING GAS ON A FIRE, WE GOT A SECOND WIND TO DESTROY THE PKI," HE SAID.

bers," said Masdoeqi, who at that time was on the training committee.

He witnessed a PKI mob attack the home of Kiai Jauhari, administrator of the Al-Jauhar Islamic Boarding School and brother-in-law to the administrator for the Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School, Kiai Makhrus Aly. The father of Gus Maksum was dragged from his home and kicked.

Afterwards, the PKI mob tied up and took 98 people, including Kiai Jauhari, to the Kras police headquarters and turned them over to the police. According to Masdoeqi, along the way this group of PKI members insulted them and threatened to kill them. They said they wanted to take revenge for the deaths of PKI cadres in Madiun and Jombang who were killed by NU members a month earlier. At the end of 1964, murders of some PKI cadres did take place in Madiun and Jombang. "The debt for Jombang and Madiun will be paid here," said Masdoeqi, imitating the shout of one PKI member who was escorting him.

This incident is known as the Kanigoro

Tragedy—the first time the PKI carried out a major attack in Kediri. Although the relationship between boarding school students and the PKI had been tense, it had never erupted in open conflict.

Although nobody died in this incident, the attack in Kanigoro was traumatic and angered the boarding school crowd and members of the Ansor in Kediri, most of whom were boarding school students. At that time, the students had no feelings of revenge. But the tension between the PKI and the students remained, like a ticking time bomb.

Kiai Idris said the enmity between the two groups had been going on long before the massacres. "When they met they would eyeball each other and try to intimidate one another," he said. The NU and PKI camps also made shows of strength in their public

events. For instance, when there was a parade to commemorate Independence Day on August 17, the PKI and NU groups taunted one another, involving sympathizers from the two sides. Conditions worsened after the PKI attack in Kanigoro.

It was also this incident in Kanigoro which strengthened the resolve of the boarding school people and Ansor members in Kediri, including Abdul, to massacre PKI members. The massacres climaxed when the government announced that the PKI was a banned organization. Abdul and the other Ansor members felt even more certain that what they did was right. "Like pouring gas on a fire, we got a second wind to destroy the PKI," he said.

Many PKI members died at Abdul's hand, so many that he lost count. In fact, Abdul's brother who was a PKI member, was also killed. "He was killed by an associate because I didn't have the heart to do it. Despite being a brother, the ideology was non-negotiable and could not be compromised." ●



**HAJI SY:**

# “WE MADE MISTAKES...”

*Haji SY still looks robust and fit at the age of 74. A grandfather of 14, he hails from Probolinggo, East Java. He studied at the Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School in Kediri, travelling back and forth between Kediri and Probolinggo every month by train.*

*He related his experience in taking part in killing local members of PKI in Probolinggo and Kediri to Tempo two weeks ago, at his home in the Grugugan district of Bondowoso. His memory was still clear, providing concise and consistent responses to our questions.*

...

**W**AS 17 years old in 1965, in the second year of secondary school at the Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School in Kediri. Since 1964, I was head of the Ansor Youth Movement (Ansor) sub-branch of the Pakuniran district of Probolinggo.

One day at Probolinggo I received a message from the Orari Headquarters of the Probolinggo Regional Military Command, from its commander, Ali Muttakim. It was an order to coordinate with the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) people, its affiliates the youth groups Banser and Ansor to nab PKI members. That night, 41 members of the Banser and GP Ansor, along with 10 soldiers and two police officers, boarded a truck borrowed from a shop belonging to an ethnic Chinese, and headed for Kresak hamlet, 10 kilometers southeast of Pakuniran. We took away seven PKI and BTI (a farmers union) leaders.

But no one knew what to do next when we reached the Glagah-Pakuniran village hall. One person suggested the prisoners be hanged. The soldiers didn't want to shoot them. Finally, I offered to kill them one by one, by cutting their throats. One of the prisoners, *Pak Astawar*, was the last. He tried to dissuade us from killing him by offering money. I refused, and slit his throat. *Wallahi wamabi* (as God and the Prophet is my witness).

Then residents dumped the bodies in a hole near Glagah River and covering it up with dirt. My assistant, Zaenab, turned to me with emotion, “How were you able to do that?” I was surprised myself, that I was able to kill those PKI members with my bare hands. My friends and I then headed to the Glagah Mosque. I doused myself with water, as my black shirt was covered in blood. I remember vividly that the shirt and pants had been given to me by *Kiai* (religious teacher) Munjahid, a teacher in Cirebon.

At the Lirboyo *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school), I was told by Fadhol Bustami, a friend from Madura, that *Kiai Mahrus Ali*, the school's administrator, was looking for me. I reported to him what we had just done, including the killings. He replied, “Good. Tonight, go join the group at Gurah (in the east of Kediri).”

After the evening prayer, I left with Fadhol Bustami and some youths and headed to Gurah. The *kiai* gave us some black clothes. Arriving at the Ansor office at Gurah, I saw that many people had gathered, including soldiers. I was ordered to take 10 men to a large house 700 meters away. According to information from ABRI (Indonesian Armed Forces, now TNI) members, the house belonged to a PKI leader from Ponorogo. I forget his name. We broke in, smashing the door. The owner appeared. He was tall



**Ansor Youth Movement** against the PKI in 1965.

and large, with a thick moustache. He said, “What is this? Is this a joke?” When Fadhol replied with a yes, he took out a short sword and slashed at Fadhol, but missed. Then Gus Khozi, another friend of mine, fought back with a sword, but it didn't do the job. It was a long fight.

I ran to the embankment near the river to take a cassava stalk about three fingers wide and returned to the house. I recited the (Arabic) *asmak* I learned from *Kiai Munjahid*. Then I hit the man from behind. He staggered, then I cut off his head with my samurai sword.

After returning to the Ansor office, I was doused with scented water. Captain Hambali gave me a black plaid Manggis-brand sarong and a white Santio-brand shirt. I was very happy with that, because I had soiled my good shirt. After that, in Lirboyo I was known as ‘Sueb the Killer’ because I had the courage to face up to the PKI people. The last one to be caught and killed was Albidin, head of the PKI central committee in Paiton.

I took part in the operations because it was citizen's duty. This was *fardu ain* (personal religious obligation), because if the PKI had won, Islam would have been destroyed. Moreover, my parents and the *kiai* gave their approval. If I'd been killed, I would die as a martyr. After succeeding in killing that PKI figure in Gurah, who was a master of Ponorogo martial arts, Gus Maksum appointed me as group leader, and I was given the task of giving out orders to stop the killings.

As a normal human being, I actually felt compassion for those PKI members. During the operations, I always remembered the words of the late *Kiai Mahrus* and *Kiai Marzuki*, to keep in mind, verse 6 of the *Al-Hujurat* chapter (in the Qur'an). That was the rule-of-thumb. So we did not just catch and kill anyone without a good reason. But we made mistakes. One day, one of my men in Paiton caught *Pak Sarati*, a Qur'an reading teacher. I tried to stop him, but he was ganged up by others and killed. I believe that although he might have been a PKI member, he may not have been a serious one and could have been persuaded to leave the PKI. ●



# THE DAY GOD 'DIED' IN MLANCU

PKI CADRES WERE MASSACRED AT THE JOMBANG-KEDIRI BORDER AREA. PENT-UP TENSIONS THAT HAD BUILT UP OVER FIVE YEARS ERUPTED ON THE EVE OF THE G-30-S MOVEMENT.

**D**ASUKI'S memory took him back to one afternoon in early November 1965, to an incident he will never forget for as long as he lives. In the dim twilight, Dasuki, then 8 years old, shuddered at the sight of hundreds of corpses, scattered around the yard of Djamal Prawito, head of Mlançu subdistrict, at the Kediri-Jombang border in East Java.

Fresh blood covered the 200-square-meter yard. "If we had walked through it, the blood would have been ankle-high," said Mlançu resident Dasuki, now 55. Two weeks ago, he led *Tempo* to sites where alleged Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) members and sympathizers were executed, in the aftermath of the bloody 30 September 1965 Movement (G-30-S).

Dasuki remembers the sickle-shaped knives, the swords and machetes, stacked next to the lifeless bodies with lacerated throats. That afternoon Dasuki saw exhausted executioners wearily returning to their homes after working for seven hours to cut the throats of about 700 people accused of be-

ing PKI members. They wore black masks.

No one came to collect the bodies. Besides the families of PKI members, said Dasuki, other residents of Mlançu were too terrified to leave their homes, especially after listening to the strange noises all night long. The bodies were eventually buried in the yard, which today is only marked by two red and white posts. In 1969, the land was dug up and the bones removed to an old well in a nearby cacao plantation.

As Dasuki remembers it, the arrest of people charged with being PKI members began in October 1965. Mlançu, a remote village surrounded by mountains, 21 kilometers from Jombang in the direction of Malang, was late in getting the news of the murder of the six army generals in Jakarta. After rioting broke out in a number of cities in East Java, Mlançu was gripped with fear.

This village is known to have been the site of the most brutal killings of PKI members. Despite its remote location, the area was regarded as a strong PKI base. It was close to the Tjoe-ekir Sugar Factory, near the Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School. The PKI centered their ac-

tivities there because of three factors: they could attract workers, sugarcane farmers, and religious school students to join the party.

The massacre in Mlançu was also recorded in the book *Palu Arit di Ladang Tebu* (*The Sick- le among the Sugarcane Fields*). Hermawan Sulisty, who compiled the research for a dissertation at Arizona State University, recorded the memory of RA, one Mlançu resident who took part in the killings. The figure of 700 bodies comes from his testimony. "This operation was a bit unusual because it was done during the day, not during the night as was the case," said RA in the book.

Hermawan, a researcher at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), concluded that the events of the G-30-S triggered the bloody conflict that had been building up over the previous five years. Being PKI or not, he said, was just a label to give a reason to kill. "That is why my father, who was not a part of anything, was also killed," Sakib, 49, told *Tempo*.

As it so happened, the government had passed the Agrarian Law in 1960. A year before this legislation went into effect, PKI cadres were overseeing its implementation in vil-





◀ **Tjoekir Sugar Factory, biggest PKI base in East Java.**

**Mlancu well in Mlancu, Jombang.**

lages, armed with 'Land for the People' campaigns. Indeed, they sought land belonging to the *kiai* (religious teachers) in addition to state-owned lands, to distribute to the poor. Many *kiai*, in addition to being popular community leaders, were also huge landowners.

The implementation of the Agrarian Law shook the provinces. "To the *kiai* and Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), that law was detrimental," said Hermawan. This is where the conflict started to erupt. In addition to using the slogan 'Land for the People' PKI cadres cleverly lured followers by holding folk drama with conspicuous titles such as *The Almighty God hosts a Wedding*.

This proved effective. Jombang and Kediri, which was the center of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) organization in East Java, slowly 'saw red.' Many NU followers who were taken by the promise of 'equal distribution, equal treatment' according to the PKI, declared their membership in the then largest communist party in the world, after the Chinese Communist Party.

These theatrical slogans and land-grabbing angered the *ulama* (religious leaders) and their followers. In addition to being blasphemous, the PKI upset them because they sought out land belonging to the *kiai*, despite having concealed their ownership. At that time, many *kiai* divided their land into small plots, which were given to relatives or endowed so that they would not fall under the new land reform regulations.

The PKI openly labeled the *kiai* and land

owners as 'The Seven Village Devils' who needed to be hunted down and eliminated. Confrontation, therefore, was unavoidable. "Those who got in the way of land grabbing were to be killed," said Is, who requested anonymity. The 70-year-old male resident of Jombang and NU figure admitted to killing 100 PKI members in one night.

News of the attempted coup on September 30, 1965 ignited resistance. According to Is, the NU Youth Group (Banser) was specially trained in self-defense, for such time when they confronted the PKI. They also later abducted PKI members and executed them.

Hermawan recalled that a major roundup of PKI in East Java began in mid-October 1965. Two weeks after the September 30 incident, the demonstrations and the riots were still small and sporadic. "This was because the military was not moving," he said. The problem was that at that time many army officers and soldiers were affiliated with the PKI.

The movement became more organized after a major parade was held in Surabaya, on October 16, 1965. The Elimination Action Committee was formed. Its members were all from religious groups: Nahdlatul Ulama, the Indonesian Christian Party, Indonesian Islamic Union Party, and the Catholic Party. After being repeatedly pressured for not meeting their demands, the military finally sealed off PKI offices in many places. It was then that the massacres began...

Hermawan, who did his research in Jombang at the end of the 1980s, concluded that

part of the mass movement was purely the people's own initiative. They reported to the local military, while some were angry after being provoked by the military. "There were many cases of executioners killing because they were afraid of being killed," he said.

The executioners worked on different levels. According to Hermawan, some coordinated the executioners, others worked at inciting public sentiment, but still others prepared the list of suspected PKI members, who were to be killed, and determining the operation times. Not surprisingly, the roundups and executions turned out to be very efficient and calculated.

As Farid Ma'ruf recalls, the executioners worked at night, surrounding the homes of PKI members. This was just like the operation to abduct the seven generals in the New Order propaganda film *G-30-S/PKI*. Farid, who was just 7 at the time, once joined a group of village youths surrounding the home of someone who ran the sugar factory. "My father led the executioners in Tjoekir," he said.

Farid wanted his father's identity to be kept secret, hence he is known simply as RA. He said that in addition to killing, his father helped gather youths from the Ansor to search for PKI members as far away as Blitar. To track them down, a truck would pick them up at home, and then take them somewhere.

RA also gathered village youths to take part in implicating neighbors suspected of being PKI followers. The execution sites were usually predetermined. If the location was not certain, said Farid, "the military would draw PKI members outside of their homes, then shoot them then and there." Their bodies were then thrown inside caves.

This bloody conflict, according to Is, took place because of long-standing suspicions. Many factors brought the conflict with the PKI to a head. When the NU held a *milad* anniversary event in January 1966, Salahuddin Wahid, administrator of the Tebuireng Pesantren, remembered the Ansor youths shouting, "Crush the PKI!" "At that time the PKI was wild," said this grandson of NU founder Hasyim Asy'ari.

Salahuddin, who at that time was 24 years old, said that he disagreed with the revenge-taking by NU and Ansor. However, an Ansor commander criticized at his opinion: "You've had it easy living in Jakarta. In Jombang there are only two choices: kill or be killed." ●

AM:

## “WE NEVER BURIED THE BODIES...”

*At the age of 70, this man sat erect, his gaze steady and sharp. He spoke emphatically. AM, as we will call him, was one of the men who took part in the tragic massacre of Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) members and sympathizers in Badas and Pare, two districts on the Jombang-Kediri border of East Java, from October to November 1965.*

*Tempo met AM in different locations in Jombang, on different dates, last September. He reconstructed events when groups of executioners were sent to the homes of PKI activists and sympathizers, as well as those who were members of sub-organizations. “They were dropped here and there. I don’t remember how many bodies dropped, or how many there were altogether,” he said.*

...

**A**LTHOUGH I was only 23 years old in 1965, I was appointed administrator of the Ansor Youth Movement (youth group affiliated with the Nahdlatul Ulama) sub-branch in Lamongan, East Java. One day, I received a letter assigning me to become a teacher at an Islamic boarding school in Jombang. In addition, I was asked to teach at an Islamic day school in the area.

That was when the political events of September 30 broke out in Jakarta. Because communication was not as good as it is today, the news only reached us two or three days later. It ignited public anger. From my observation, this anger was spontaneous and not engineered. This was because, in general, they had long been repressing a hatred of the PKI. This accumulated anger, which was initially bottled up, seemingly found its outlet.

Ansor gathered their rank and file. Tens of members of the Banser (Ansor’s multipurpose unit), including myself, had gathered at a large field in Mojoduwur village, Mojowarno district. This group was led by two *kiai* (religious teachers) who were well-respected, because they knew how to develop powers of invincibility and carried special amulets. First our physical condition was hardened. After this, our mental strength was improved, including being ‘filled’ with the powers of invincibility. On the final day, we were all given rattan canes about as wide as a forefinger, and about a meter long. Whoever held this rattan would have powers of invulnerability.

That night, from 7pm to 9 pm, we were doing religious studies as usual at the boarding school. Nearing midnight, 30 people who once took part in the training were asked to get ready. We had the students change into all-black clothing. We all wrapped our heads in *udheng*, which looks like the clothing worn by the character Sakerah in the *ludruk* stories (an East Javanese folk drama). Psychologically, the all-black clothing made us feel braver. We also carried machetes or sickles.

We were given the list of people who were to be killed that night, not knowing who made the list. Clearly the targets were top ad-



ministrators of the local PKI central committees, especially the chairmen and their secretaries. So in each village there were one or two people targeted. After getting ready, we would head for the major three-way intersection about 1 kilometer from the boarding school (the main route between Jombang and Mojokerto). A pickup truck awaited us there.

We got in the truck to go to the target area. We were not allowed to talk while in the truck. The truck’s lights were also turned





◀ **Labor Day celebration** by PKI members in East Java.

fate. Even though some were physically tall and large, they did not try to run away or resist. After intimidating them once, their mental condition usually ebbed.

One or two of our targets possessed powers of invincibility. For instance, when hit in the neck with a machete, nothing happened. However, I knew the weakness of people like this. I knew how they had become immune to being hacked. For sure, after the victim finally fell, we just left their body. We never buried the bodies. We left them for their family to take home. At that time, there was no feeling of sympathy, no feeling of horror. This was because my head was already filled with hatred for the PKI.

That hatred had been with me since I was in Lamongan. At that time the influence of the PKI was getting stronger in the community. With the slogan “The Land Belongs to the People” and “Equal Land Distribution,” the PKI had promised that it would give a piece of land to each of its members. This propaganda proved to be effective, as many NU members in districts in Lamongan rushed to join the PKI. Sugio district, for instance, was a PKI base, in addition to Sambeng, Tikung, and Laren.

One day, PKI leader D.N. Aidit came to Lamongan. He gave a speech at the square in Lamongan, speaking in *krama inggil* (high) dialect of Javanese. Thousands attended, including myself. Aidit’s speech was pleasant to hear, smooth and calculated. It was very alluring. The essence of Aidit’s speech was to call on PKI members and sympathizers, to fight together to bring about prosperity, especially through a land reform program.

District officials who were affiliated with the PKI would then enact a policy banning anyone to own land outside of their place of residence. For instance, if Mr. A lived in Sugio, he could not own land in another district. This policy triggered arbitrary actions in many places. The PKI robbed people’s land at whim. Anyone who got in their way was killed. Some land owners were killed with bladed weapons or they were attacked by gangs.

The PKI was getting increasingly aggressive with its provocation. They even staged a folk play at a field near a mosque. They were loud, disturbing the people who were worshipping there. They announced that the story to be performed was *Gusti Allah Mantu* (The Wedding of God). But this was just a trick to get crowds to be indoctrinated by their propaganda. I was curious so I went there. It turned out to be an ordinary story and had nothing to do with the title.

It was under these conditions that I came to hate the PKI. Today, the people who killed PKI members are being slapped with human rights issues. But they never did anything about the PKI’s cruelty at that time. ●

off. I didn’t know the identity of the driver or the truck owner. The streets we passed were dark. It was past midnight when we reached Badas and Pare (about 20 kilometers away).

The truck stopped. We got out and spread out, heading for the target. I knocked on the door of the person to be eliminated. After confirming that this was the target, we asked them to go to a deserted area, a plantation or edge of a river. The important thing was that it was deserted. They generally were resigned to their

# THE RAVINE OF TEARS

IN BANYUWANGI, THE EXECUTIONERS TOOK TURNS KILLING THEIR PRISONERS. THE BODIES WERE FLUNG INTO THE RAVINE OF TEARS.

**T**HE unit was called Gagak Hitam (Black Raven). It was not a part of the military because its members came from the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI) and their mass organizations in Banyuwangi, East Java. It was tasked with eliminating communists in the easternmost part of Java. It was named Gagak Hitam because its men were dressed in black; their shirts, pants and headbands.

The unit was formed following the killing of 62 Ansor (NU-affiliated youth group) members at Cemethuk hamlet in Banyuwangi. Ansor youths, armed with scythes, samurai swords, kris and pointed bamboo poles, were on their way to fight Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) members, when they were waylaid at the village corner and locked up with PNI members. The incident, known as Lubang Buaya (Crocodile Hole), was later immortalized at the Cemethuk Pancasila Jaya Monument.

We met with a former Gagak Hitam member in Boyolangu, Giri district. Despite his 80 years, Baidawi, still looked sturdy. As a youth, he was quite a respected figure. He once headed the Indonesian Muslim Culture and Art Institute (Lesbumi)—affiliated with NU—in Boyolangu village. He was also feared because reportedly he had killed countless PKI sympathizers during his youth.

However, when he met *Tempo* at the end of last September, Baidawi refuted his reputation. “If anybody says I used to kill PKI members, just ignore it. It’s not true. I only witnessed the killings,” said Baidawi. He had joined Gagak Hitam because he saw communism as a threat to the nation. “Now I no longer remember it, and hope the PKI doesn’t emerge again in Indonesia,” he added.

The extermination of communists sympathizers was openly announced by a district employee. “Carrying a loudspeaker, he would tell the public that PKI members had to be eliminated,” he recalled.

The unit went to PKI headquarters, its



affiliate organizations and homes of their officials. Wielding daggers, Gagak Hitam men slaughtered them and hurled their corpses into rivers or ravines. The homes of suspected communists were burnt down. “It was like doomsday,” he said.

Apart from civilians, soldiers also carried out the mass killings. In fact, it was because the troops were so overwhelmed by the large numbers of people to be killed, that part of the job was entrusted to several villages, including Boyolangu. Baidawi remembered that his hamlet alone, at one time, was tasked with killing five communists, four men and a woman.

They were executed at night, in the middle of a field that has now been turned into a cemetery. The killing was attended by hundreds of residents, all holding daggers, including Baidawi himself. With their hands tied back, the condemned five were slain by the crowd and buried in one hole.

The former secretary the Banyuwangi People’s Cultural Institute (Lekra), Andang Chatif Yusuf, said the number of communists killed was estimated to be in the thousands.

▲ **Jurang Tangis**, the place where bodies of murdered PKI members were thrown.

He himself was imprisoned by soldiers for two years. Before being jailed, he was taken to a detention camp in a field in Kalibaru district. During the 10 days he was detained in this camp, Andang witnessed thousands of people detained like himself. “District chiefs, village heads, clerks, were all ordered to gather in the camp,” said Andang.

There, they were later selected according to the types of punishment they were meted out. The most severe was immediate execution, usually at night. Their dead bodies were thrown into Jurang Tangis (Ravine of Tears). The ravine, located in the area of Baluran National Park, at the border between Banyuwangi and Situbondo, is today the site of a mass grave containing the bodies of slain communists in Banyuwangi. Another can be found at the side of a ravine at Mount Kunitir, at the border between Banyuwangi and Jember. ●



# TAKEN BY THE TIDE

ON A BRIDGE AT THE SOLO-SUKOHARJO BORDER, CIVILIANS JOINED SOLDIERS IN SLAUGHTERING SUSPECTED COMMUNISTS, THEIR CORPSES DUMPED IN THE SWIFT-FLOWING SOLO RIVER.



**M**BAH Wiryo, had gooseflesh when she saw the piles of a former bridge being erected in the middle of Solo River. The 80-year-old was reminded of something she witnessed 47 years ago. The bridge in Telukan village, Central Java, is a silent witness to the slaying of people accused of being involved with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI).

After September 1965, from her home just 100 meters from Bacem Bridge, she would hear shots. "Then there were sounds like objects falling into the river," said Mbah Wiryo, two weeks ago, recalling the sounds of corpses being dropped into the river.

By her count, in a span of six months, the killing of PKI members took place every two or three days. When a bang sounded from a firearm, people living around the bridge hurriedly locked their doors. "If you lingered outside, you ran the risk of being accused as a PKI member," she recalled. Residents only dared to go out when morning came. Only then, coming out of the house, would she catch sight of corpses at the edge of the Solo River. Later, men would shove the scattered bodies into the river, so they would drift away.

The bridge, 4 kilometers from the hub of Solo city, seemed to have been a favorite

execution spot. Sudharmono, a historian of Sebelas Maret State University in Surakarta, said the killings of PKI sympathizers in the Bacem Bridge area occurred around October 1965. As a result of the carnage, witnesses recalled, the Solo River turned red. From time to time, the locals found human fingers inside fish bellies. After the area was flooded in 1966, all traces of the slayings in the river vanished. "The river was again clean," added Sudharmono.

Bibit, who was once detained at the Solo Military District Command as an alleged PKI member, counted a total of 144 detainees being carried to the place of execution, one by one. He also heard from others that the prisoners were killed on the bridge. This site, he pointed out, also became a killing field for other executioners from other locations. He revealed all this when he and members of the Association of the New Order's Victims made a pilgrimage to this killing field in 2005. Bibit's testimony was posted on the personal website of Umar Said, an Indonesian journalist living in exile in Paris, who died about a year ago. According to Bibit, several days after the killings, security forces ordered the nearby villagers to clean the remaining bloodstains on the side of the bridge.

According to Supeno, coordinator of the

▲ **The remains of Bacem Bridge's foundations. Former execution site.**

association, in addition to the military, the Bacem Bridge executioners were members of the Ansor Youth Brigade (Banser), affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama Islamic organization. "I heard that the Banser also took part in shooting PKI members," he said, interviewed two weeks ago.

But an NU senior in Solo, *Kiai* (religious teacher) Haji Abdul Rozaq Shofawi, denied that the Banser had joined the slaughter. He claimed the Banser was only tasked with protecting *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) from the PKI threat and that Banser was on the alert because no military unit at the time had entered Solo. "At that time, the PKI was rumored to be on their way to kill NU clerics," said Abdul Rozaq.

Supeno, now 82, was jailed by the military in November 1965 on charges of being linked to the PKI. He recalled that at least 71 executions had taken place on Bacem Bridge. The killings were always done stealthily at night. In memory of the victims, Supeno, a father of six, along with people who suffered the same fate, make the annual pilgrimage to Bacem Bridge, throwing flowers into the river. ●



## BURHAN ZAINUDDIN RUSJIMAN, 72: A LICENSE TO KILL

**I** WAS dubbed Burhan Kampak (axe), because during the conflict in 1965-1966, I frequently carried an axe to chase people believed to be involved in communism. But I also used to execute them with a pistol. My principle was that I would rather kill than be killed.

My hatred of communism began as a student, when I joined the Islamic Students Association (HMI). I was convinced that communists were the enemy of all religions. It was among others due to the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) Conference edict in South Sumatra in mid-1962. MUI declared communism *haram* (prohibited) for being atheistic. From then on I thought, Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) members should be fostered if possible, or eliminated if they refused.

In early 1965, in my third-year study at the Law School of Gadjah Mada University, I was expelled for putting up a banner and poster demanding the break-up of the Indonesian Students Movement Center (CGMI). To me, it wasn't worth CGMI being on campus as the movement was under the PKI.

When I held up the poster, I was felled by the kick of a CGMI member.

Campus executives then branded me a counterrevolutionary and against the concept of Nasakom (nationalism, religion, communism) introduced by President Sukarno.

Before the outbreak of the September 30 movement (G-30-S), in 1963-1964 CGMI was at large, terrorizing Islamic groups and students. PKI supporters almost daily held orations and demos in Malioboro and other strategic places. Unless proper care was taken while in Malioboro, one could be a target of the actions.

My hatred climaxed when I heard PKI Central Committee Chairman D.N. Aidit humiliate the HMI. At the Third Congress of CGMI on September 29, 1965, Aidit said, if CGMI was unable to remove HMI from the campus, they should just wear sarongs.

When the G-30-S incident broke out, I waged intensive war on the PKI and its sympathizers in Yogyakarta, especially after the arrival of the Army Strategic Reserve Command (Kostrad) and the Army Para Commando Regiment (RPKAD) troops in Yogyakarta around October 1965. The presence of the troops under Col. Sarwo Edhie Wibowo brought fresh air to the Islamic mass movement.

I was engaged in killing communists together with the soldiers. We civilians were asked to form human cordons. It was the legal side. But as the community and Islamic groups also harbored a grudge, we also frequently moved on our own.

In my capacity as first staffer of the Aris Margono Ampera (Message of People's Suffering) Troop of the Indonesian Student Action Front (KAMI), I had a license to kill people who were proven involved in the PKI. Ten people were given FN pistols and trained in Kaliurang. The pistols were provided around November 1965. Only student organization leaders got the guns and training.

I returned to the Kostrad head office in Yogyakarta most often to secure bullets. With the pistol, I launched operations to find PKI sympathizers and leaders in Yogyakarta nearly every day, from end-1965 to mid-1966.

My areas of operation went beyond Yogya. I also frequently joined the raids from Luweng Gunungkidul to Manisrenggo and Kaliwedi in Klaten, Central Java. In Luweng, executions were carried out at night, by pushing blindfolded people off a steep hill into rivers flowing to the south coast of Java.

In Kaliwedi, west of Klaten, before killing them, residents were asked to dig 100-200-meter ditches where PKI cadres would be placed for execution. In Kaliwedi rifles and AKs were used. Pistols were only used to make sure that the victims had really died. ●





# GRIPPED BY FEAR

THE MASSACRE OF PKI MEMBERS IN BALI BEGAN IN JEMBRANA. THOUSANDS WERE KILLED WITHOUT ANY RESISTANCE.

**N**OT much had changed at the old two-story building in Lelateng village, Jembrana regency. Although the walls looked lackluster and unkempt, the thick-walled building with three large windows on the second floor appeared sturdy. Four decades ago, this building was known as Toko Wong or Wong's Shop.

When *Tempo* visited in mid-September, the elderly in Jembrana still vividly remembered the murky history of Toko Wong. Although today the building is used to sell furniture, it is not easy to forget what happened there at the end of November 1965.

"That shop was used to hold PKI members," said Ida Bagus Raka Negara, 73, former Tegalcangkring village chief in Jembrana. He recalled how each night large military trucks would bring hundreds of

members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) to be held there. "At that time, the prison in the center of town was already full," he said.

The detainees were not held long. Whenever the ground floor and second floor of the building initially famous as a sundries shop was full of people, the same trucks would take them away. None of them ever returned. One night, for some reason, the guards got angry. "All of the PKI inmates were gunned down with a machine gun," said Raka. No less than 200 died that night.

"Then we threw their bodies in wells around the shop," said one resident, backing up Raka's story. Not wanting his name mentioned, he seemed reluctant to remember the tragedy at Toko Wong. Only one thing stuck in his mind: "There was so much blood!"



THE killings of PKI members in Bali did not happen right after the abduction and murder of six Indonesian Army generals in Jakarta, which took place in early October 1965. When news of the bloody conflict in the capital reached Bali, the political situation immediately tensed up. However, there was no movement yet that would lead to the mass killings of PKI members.

Geoffrey Robinson, in his book *The Dark Side of Paradise*, which deals with the history of the political killings in Bali, chronicles the events which climaxed in the elimination of all PKI cadres on the 'Island of the Gods.' He discovered that the killings first took place in early December 1965, after forces from the Army Regiment and Brawijaya Regional Military Command in East Java landed in Bali.

According to Robinson, prior to that there was aggressive pressure from the Indonesian National Party (PNI) and

PHOTOS: TEMPO/BALI CONTRIBUTOR



◀ **Baluk Rening Beach, Baluk village, Jembrana, Bali, and Toko Wong.**

military also issued lists of people suspected to be PKI members, complete with documents on their 'planned rebellions.'

Public anger began to boil over. An incident in Tegalbadeng, Jembrana, marked the start of the mass killings in Bali.

On November 30, 1965, one soldier and two youths from the NU's Barisan Ansor unit, moved quietly around the house of Santun, a police officer in Tegalbadeng. There was news that Santun was holding a secret meeting of PKI administrators at his home that night. Suddenly, Santun saw them. A pistol was fired and the three were shot and killed.

News of the murders spread quickly. That night the military attacked Tegalbadeng. "People were running about like chickens being chased. The sound of gunfire was

Ida Bagus Raka had a similar story. In his village of Tegalcangkring, he was appointed head of the Pancasila Front. His job was to select who must be killed and who would be allowed to live. "There were 432 on my list of PKI members. I only turned 15 over to the military," he said slowly.

That December, Jembrana was gripped with fear. The governor's younger brother, Anak Agung Bagus Denia, was picked up at his house in Puri Jembrana. "He was taken away in a truck which was followed by a military jeep," said Bagus Raka, who witnessed the incident. Then Denia's body was paraded around town and the entire Puri Jembrana housing complex was burned down.

Massacres took place in every Bali town. In Gianyar, *Tempo* found one man—who we will call Wayan—a former village chief who helped kill PKI members in 1965. Meetings to discuss the arrest and killing of communist sympathizers in Gianyar were held at district offices. "At that time there

some Islamic organizations, such as Muhammadiyah, to restore order and destroy the PKI. But the military authority in Bali did not respond to this. Robinson, a researcher from Cornell University in the US, wrote that the top military officials in Bali were still confused as to the stance it should take: follow Sukarno or Suharto.

On top of this, the governor of Bali, Anak Agung Bagus Sutedja, was a senior PKI member. It was this indecision which kept the PKI groups in the villages relatively safe. Clashes had broken out, but were still very sporadic. In some regencies, members of the Pemuda Rakyat (a PKI-affiliated youth organization) even attacked their rivals from PNI and the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU).

In mid-November 1965, for instance, a PKI mob attacked PNI cadres in the villages of Gerokgak, West Buleleng, and Bungkulun in East Buleleng. A clash broke out and some youths died, but the fighting did not spread to other areas.

It was only after Sutedja was fired at the end of November 1965 that the situation changed. The commander of the Dwikora Region—the highest military ruler in a province at that time—Brigadier-General Sjafiuddin ordered that all people suspected of links with the PKI make an open declaration denouncing the events of the G-30-S (September 30 Movement). The

**"PEOPLE WERE RUNNING ABOUT LIKE CHICKENS BEING CHASED. THE SOUND OF GUNFIRE WAS HEARD ALL DAY."**

heard all day," said 78-year-old Dewa Ketut Denda, a resident of Tegalbadeng, when *Tempo* visited the village two weeks ago. It is not clear how many PKI members were killed that day, but the incident led the PNI group to counterattack.

"All of the PNI chiefs in the villages were asked to gather men who were good at fighting, to become members of a core force," said Ketut Denda. This force was known as the 'Marhaenis Shield.' In his village, 30 or more joined this group. He was also asked to join, but he refused because he was scared.

After that, said Ketut Dewa, military trucks began arriving in the villages, picking up PKI members and sympathizers, and taking them away. Out front, the Shield members cleared the road. As locals, they knew who was in the Red camp. Each day, thousands were taken away. Some were gathered at the village graveyard, and some were taken to Baluk Rening Beach, not far from the neighborhood. That was where the killings were done.

was an instruction from the commander of the Operation to Restore Security and Order Command (Komkaptib) in Bali to wipe out the PKI," he said.

In line with a decision made at a district meeting, as village chief Wayan was to recruit 30 men to be Shield members. They were tasked with rounding up 40 PKI members in their own villages. This was done early in the morning. "After all of them had been rounded up, we took them to Saba Beach in Blahbatu, Gianyar, in a military truck," he said. All that morning, the police and the military came along for the roundup.

On the beach, the PKI prisoners were separated based on their home villages. While waiting, they were asked to squat on the sand. Then the members of the Shield were asked to change places, so that they would not have to kill a neighbor or a relative. After that, using whatever weapons they had—short swords and machetes—hundreds, maybe thousands, of PKI cadres were beheaded. ●





## I KETUT MANTRAM: THE LIST FROM KODIM

**I** AM now 72. I remember that when the Gestok or October 1, 1965, movement took place in Jakarta, I was in Bali, where I was secretary of the Indonesian National Party (PNI) in Baluk village, Negara district, Jembrana regency. The abduction of generals in Jakarta had heated up the situation in Jembrana, including in Baluk, where I lived. There was a long, acrimonious relationship between the PNI and the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). We competed and we often became violent.

I remember a bloody incident that took place in Tegal Badeng village, Jembrana. At the time, I heard that one soldier had been killed. The soldier was conducting surveillance on a secret meeting of PKI members at a house near a temple in Tegal Badeng. One police officer who supported the meeting shot him.

News of the death immediately spread all over Jembrana. The Regional Military Command's (Kodim) stance was to eliminate all PKI members in Jembrana regency. Coincidentally, in Baluk a command post had been built right on the land where the Baluk village hall stands now. It was led by the then PNI chairman. In accordance with the order from the Kodim, the PNI formed a core platoon of 37 people, of which I was one.

This core force was known as a Tameng (Shield). Such groups were formed in each village in Jembrana. Our group was named the Rantai (Chain) force, which was an

abbreviation for 'ready to die to defend the party.' Tameng were given swords and wore black shirts and pants, with red berets. Our assignment was to round up and execute PKI members according to the list of names given by the Kodim.

While waiting for this assignment, we were trained in security measures in case there was any resistance from the people we were to arrest. Fortunately none of those we rounded up resisted. However, a few of them had 'special' powers. My regiment was once given the task of killing the PKI chief in Brambang village, Jembrana. There was a PKI member there who was unaffected by gunshots. Fortunately he died after his head was cut off with a sword.

Every day, for about three months, we had to stay at the post waiting for orders from the Kodim. We didn't care whether it was day or night, hot or cold. Every order which came in had to be carried out. At that time the mood was terrifying. During the day none of the residents dared to walk around outside. At night, all the lights were turned off. If we walked around, both sides of the street were dark.

I remember, we first received a 'deposit' of 90 PKI members. Most of them were from Tegal Badeng village. The same night we executed them by slitting their throats or stabbing them in the chest with short or regular-sized swords, which had been taken from PKI members. As someone who had never killed a person before, I initially felt afraid. But, because this was an order,

I had to do it. Moreover, I saw this as a duty for the country. We took the bodies by truck to bury in holes which had been prepared at the edge of Baluk Rening Beach.

Yehembang to Gilimanuk was our operation area. The command post was one place where the executions took place. Sometimes we took them alive to Baluk Rening Beach. There they were asked to line up facing the beach, then we immediately cut them down from behind. The Kodim determined which regiments got assignments, which villages, the list of people to be eliminated, and the place of execution and burial. We only had to carry out the orders.

As well as Baluk Rening Beach, we also prepared holes to bury the bodies of PKI members, which we called crocodile holes, at Cupel Beach and Candi Kusuma Beach, in the Malaya district. The beach area was chosen because it was easier to dig there. One hole could hold 20 bodies, depending on how many were executed at one time.

Although headquarters asked us to rid PKI members down to their roots, my friends and I would be selective. We only eliminated those who were truly involved. After receiving the written order from the Kodim, we in the regiment were taken by bus—which was also taken from the PKI—to the target village. We were accompanied by soldiers and an escort from the village, who pointed out the homes of the PKI members we had come for. Sometimes, when the neighborhoods were too far from the crocodile holes, we just threw their bodies inside wells.

In our work, we were mostly under the command of Kodim soldiers. However, sometimes people came from the RPKAD (Special Forces). They went around the post to check the situation, riding vehicles like jeeps. There weren't many of them, just a few. But they were good-looking, wore yellow camouflage uniforms and red berets, and carried weapons that had been polished yellow. The RPKAD would come when the situation was secured.

After three months, the order came to cease activities. We were all asked to return to our homes. Remembering how hard we worked back then, the whole experience felt like a piece written in pencil, easily erasable. There was no pay, no one thanked us. Suddenly, it was over and we were told to go home. That was that. The important thing was that I helped secure the country. ●



◀  
Garam hamlet, the massacre location.

# THE OPERATIONS COMMANDER AS GOD

IF ONE DETAINEE ESCAPED, TWO  
NEGLIGENT EXECUTIONERS WOULD  
BECOME THE VICTIMS THEMSELVES.

**P**ARTS of this picture will never fade from the memory of *Bapak* Peter (not his real name), 75. In one of his darkest nights, a car roared into the area of Wairita Beach, around 15 kilometers from Maumere, capital of Sikka regency in Flores. Handcuffed men with their legs bound, were dragged out of the car towards three 2 x 2.5-meter holes. At the edge of the holes, executioners were waiting with long machetes.

"I was powerless to save them. Even my life was at stake. I didn't recognize anyone. The atmosphere was dark," said Peter, who claimed to have been brought by soldiers to Wairita to dig holes for the victims. Last week the man from Lembata, Flores, recounted the tragedy to *Tempo*, at a meeting in Maumere.

Back then, Peter worked as a clerk at the cooperative of the seaport. He was

then 27 years old. The morning before the slaughter, he and his friends gathered at the Tanta Ia Restaurant, located near the port. They were asked whether they were willing to perform the task of killing members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) or people suspected of PKI links. "After our meals, we walked two by two to various directions and then a truck came to pick us up to take us to Wairita Beach," said Peter.

After the killings, the soldiers ordered them to bury the bodies and cover the graves with leaves. The work was completed at 5am. The local military district commander forbade them to tell the story to anyone.

But one thing he remembered most was the person who beheaded 10 PKI suspects in Garam hamlet, Maumere subdistrict, in 1966. Today, this kampung is part of West Alok subdistrict. Most of its residents work at producing salt. During high tides their

houses get regularly flooded.

There is a 400-square-meter area that the Sikkaneese believe is the biggest mass grave, filled with victims of the 1966 massacres. According to rumors, there were almost 100 people buried there, originating from the villages of Bola and Baubatun of Kewapante subdistrict. Local residents say there were three holes up to 3 meters deep and 25 meters wide where the victims were buried.

Today, the place is nothing but heaps of soil on which coconuts and wild grass grow. Local residents recount that during the night they often hear strange noises, like people singing.

Peter did not recognize any of the men he beheaded. He said the government just arrested them because their names were on the list handed out by the military. The origin of the list was also mysterious. "Sometimes I'm haunted by feelings of guilt. Every year I make a special request for a Requiem Mass for the repose of the deceased. I am convinced that God has received the victims in heaven," said Peter slowly, as if trying to convince himself.

He forgot the day, the date and the month of the incident. What he does remember was that the event took place when the cornfields were about to be harvested. The victims were laid between the rows of corn, handcuffed and legs tied. Their throats were right in the middle of the hole. No noise was heard, except for the sound of the machetes swinging down on heads, and the thud of bodies falling into the hole.

...

FR. Hubertus Thomas Hasulie SVD, a researcher at the Candraditya Center for Research on Religion and Culture in Maumere, once researched the slaughter in Sikka. Hubert—as he is called—began his research in 2000. The killings, in his estimation, began in March 1966. But the victims had been detained without trial since December 1965.

According to Fr Hubert, in Sikka, the state's operations were carried out by the Armed Forces (at that time known as ABRI, now as TNI) who were tasked with the area's security, at a time of clashes between residents from different backgrounds:



based on political party, religion, ethnic group and culture. The graves were usually named after the Catholic Party, the Indonesian Christian Party and the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). “The killings were always witnessed by representatives of the parties,” said Hubert.

To intensify the terror, the killings were carried out in every subdistrict. When no PKI member could be found in the area, the victims were brought in from other regions and killed there. Throughout Sikka regency, there were around 30 execution sites, from the subdistricts of Talibura, Waigete, Kewa, Bola, Alok, Maumere, Nita, Lela, Lekebai, to as far as Paga.

Before the slaughter, TNI personnel usually fetched representatives of the Catholic Party, Indonesian Christian Party and NU representatives, and envoys of Catholics, Protestants and Muslims to be witnesses. The executioners were also taken from among these groups. They were ordered to kill while the soldiers and police stood guard, and supplied them with weapons. If one of the detainees escaped, two executioners considered neglectful were to substitute for the victims.

The Security and Order Restoration Operation Command—in those days widely known as Komop—recruited many executioners at the time. In his research Hubert interviewed five executioners, one of whom was a military personnel.

Each person admitted to having killed between 10 to 20 people. The number of victims in the whole Sikka regency was reported to be around 1,000 to 1,500 people.

Generally the executioner was forced to do the killing under threat. They were told that the PKI men were evil people who did not believe in God. “In Sikka, such indoctrination was intense: if the PKI men weren’t killed, they would first kill the priests, nuns, brothers, and students in the seminaries,” Hubert told *Tempo*.

Nobody could stop the killing. Even as an institution, the Catholic Church could not do much. Only a few priests dared to approach the victims to listen to their confessions before they were killed. Among the priests were Clemens Parera SVD and Frans Cornelissen SVD.

►  
**Fr. Frederikus da Lopez Pr,**  
better known  
as Romo Pedé.

**Fr. Hubert Thomas**  
(below).



Fr. Frederikus da Lopez Pr, better known as Romo Pedé, an assistant to the Parish Priest of Bola—around 20 kilometers from the city of Maumere—tried to defend those of his flock who were arrested. But he was threatened by the military.

When *Tempo* met Romo Pedé, 75, at the Seminary of Ritapiret, in Sikka regency, he could clearly recall the happenings that took place 46 years ago. In the late afternoon of March 6, 1966, a band of the military command from Maumere arrived in Bola. They came to fetch men who had been gathered in the cooperative building of the village.

On hearing what was going on, Romo Pedé hurried to the cooperative building, meeting with the commander on guard. “Let me ask you, why these men are arrested. If they are really PKI members then they must be only from the lower levels,” said Romo Pedé.

Previously, two elementary school teachers, Jonas and Donatus, recounted how they succeeded in setting free residents of Moribelang hamlet. They were detained because they had been registered as members of the Catholic Party. Then Romo Pedé demanded to the personnel on guard: “They must be cross-examined, whether they are also registered as members of Catholic Party.” But the request was turned down. Romo Pedé was offered to join them to go to Maumere.

They arrived at the headquarters of the Maumere Military Operation Command around midnight. Romo Pedé was seen by Major Soemarmo, then the commander. Soemarmo asked who were to be released. Romo Pedé answered, all of them. The request was rejected. Later it was revealed the victims were executed in Garam hamlet.

Following his ‘opposition’ to the operations, all mail sent from the seminary was to be checked beforehand by government agencies. The military was worried that the story of the killing of PKI members would circulate outside. On March 15, 1966, the Kodim 1607 Operations Commander, Major Soemarmo sent a warning letter to the Dean—a cleric representing the Bishop—of Maumere.

The message was titled: The interference of the clergy in the business of the Komop No B.061/III/1966. “Every interference into and negative contribution against the efforts of the Komop of the Sikka and East Flores regencies is identical with protecting the Gestapu-PKI and its henchmen,” wrote Soemarmo. The clergymen were cautioned not to interfere in Komop business. The Dean of Maumere was requested to remove Fr. Pedé from Bola, “before the Komop takes preemptive action.”

With the consent of Mgr. Gabriel Manek SVD, the Bishop of Ende, Romo Pedé was finally transferred to Ndonga, in Ende regency. When he was interviewed, Romo Pedé told *Tempo*, “In Ende, I reported to the Bishop that in Maumere the Operations commander had become God.” ●



## BAPA TENGORAK:

# I HAD TO KILL MY OWN FAMILY

**T**ENS of years ago, I worked as a manual laborer at Maumere seaport, now Lorens Say seaport. On March 18, 1963, I was imprisoned because I killed my uncle. I was angry at him because he refused to share the money he got from selling fish. I hit him with a sword when both of us were in a restaurant.

For the killing I was sentenced to 12 years in prison. But after only three years in jail, the commander of Military District 1603 sent a letter to the prison warden. They wanted to recruit me and nine other prisoners to be executioners—and I was appointed as commander.

After the recruitment, we were taken to the headquarters of the Maumere Military District Command (Kodim), and we were informed that they wanted to assign us defense duties. We were told to hunt and kill members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). We were also sworn-in to carry out the task. After that, we were told to go home and be combat-ready if we were, at any time, summoned to do the task. The summons would be made through *Regional Government Radio*.

In February 1966 we were summoned to gather at the Kodim. We were equipped with three spades, three hoes and four harrows. Each executioner was given a machete. After that we were taken to the killing fields chosen by the commander of the Security and Order Restoration Operation Command (Komop). There, we were told to dig a hole 3 meters deep and 5 meters wide.

Initially we were stationed at the village of Wairita. There we dug three holes and buried 45 persons suspected of being PKI members. The execution took place at midnight under the order of the Komop commander. We were not able to refuse

because this was seen as a task for the state. It had to be carried out, even if some of the people we beheaded were our own family members.

That night a number of PKI members were taken down from the Komop's truck, handcuffed and legs tied. They were not blindfolded. They were taken close to the hole and we cut off their heads with our machetes. Blood gushed out, splashing on my body and face.

Each person we killed was directly thrown into the hole we had prepared. Armed policemen and military personnel guarded us tightly. After all of them were thrown in the hole, we were told to bury them. We planted a *reo* tree or a branch of the *kedondong* tree over the grave, to mark the site.

I never found out where those we killed came from. There were also many whom I was acquainted with. I even had to kill two members of my own family.

The butchering spread to the villages of Waidoko, Mission Plantation (behind the

Sikka regent's office), Watulemang, Koting, Nita, Pauparangbeda, Rane, Detung, Higetegera, Baungparat and Pigang. Hundreds were killed. I knew this because each time we executed the victims, it was always documented by the Komop commander, Major Soemarmo.

The massacre lasted for four months until May 1966. After that the 10 of us were paid as much as Rp150,000 each and five sacks of rice, each containing 50 kilograms. Having accomplished a special task for the state, I was not required to return to prison. I will never forget the Kodim commander Gatot Suherman and Major Soemarmo who ordered us to execute the PKI members.

Today I am a gravedigger and I live with my wife. The villagers call me *Bapa Tengkorak* or Father Skull. I am grateful that I can live peacefully with the victims' families, including those whose family members I killed. They understand that what I did was because I was pressured by the military. ●







1965 EXECUTIONERS

# BEYOND BURU ISLAND

Following the 1965 bloody events, Kopkamtib (Command for the Restoration of Security and Order) mounted Operations Kalong (Bat) and Trisula (Trident) to capture, detain and interrogate people accused of being PKI members around the country. Without due process of law, these people were thrown into concentration camps. Besides remote Buru Island in eastern Indonesia where political detainees were exiled, others were imprisoned in Gunung Sahari II (Jakarta), Pelantungan (Central Java), Jalan Gandi (Medan), Pulau Kemaro (Palembang) and Mocongloe (South Sulawesi) jails. These were Indonesia's version of Guantanamo. In those hell-holes, they suffered varying degrees of mental and physical torture.



**Inmates**, suspected PKI members, at Tangerang prison, 1966.

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# THE BAT'S TORTURE CHAMBERS

THE SECURITY FORCES USED VARIOUS METHODS TO EXTRACT CONFESSIONS FROM DETAINEES.

**T**HE old man made a special request that the history of the old house near his home on Jalan Gunung Sahari II, in Central Jakarta, be forgotten. It was, he said, a past tragedy. "It's dangerous to remember it," he said, requesting that his identity not be disclosed. In fact, this elderly resident of the area started interrogating *Tempo* who met him, a fortnight ago. "How did you know about this? This is an old case," he said, probing.

The No. 8 house is the former headquarters of Tim Operasi Kalong (Operation Bat), the military unit which arrested and extracted confessions from hundreds of people following the events of G-30-S, 1965 (September 30 Movement). "I was 10 years old then," said the man. When the question turned to the owner of the large house, he just shook his head.

The caretaker of the house did not know who owned the house either, claiming he was a new employee. "The proprietor of this house doesn't live here. It is used as a place to store the goods of the *engkoh* (by which a male Chinese is addressed) who sells his merchandise at Senen," he said. He blocked *Tempo* from passing through a 2.5-meter-high black-colored fence with coils of barbed wire on top.

The house has become run-down. The white color of the walls has become gray with age. Its courtyard was untidy. The dry leaves of *kapok* and *petai cina* trees covered parts of the cemented yard. Mounds of old cardboard boxes of electronic goods lay on the terrace 'guarded' by two rigid pillars. On one pillar was a sticker with the label, 'TNI AD' (Army).

"The house's condition remains the same

as it was," said Syaiful (not his real name) in mid-September. Syaiful was a former political detainee who was tortured there. Before it was used as the Operasi Kalong headquarters in 1966, according to Syaiful, the house was the office of an association of *becak* (pedicab) drivers. The front walls were filled with traffic signs to remind *becak* drivers of traffic rules.

Syaiful was arrested in 1968 and banished to Buru Island. He was eventually released in 1979. The former journalist of *Harian Rakyat* (People's Daily) and a Lekra (People's Cultural Institute) activist was 27 when he had to deal with the military. He said torture had become Kalong's standard procedure. "I was electrocuted and beaten up," reported Syaiful.

Other Kalong inmates, Jawito, 62, and Bedjo Untung, 64, reported that half of the place was transformed into an auditorium, an admin office and an interrogation room. The rest, about 200 square meters in size, in the rear part, was used to house the detainees.

Originally from Pemalang in Central Java, these two men had a 'taste' of detention at the Kalong for about a year. Bedjo was an activist of Pekalongan's Indonesian Students Association, while Juwito was a member of the People's Youth (Pemuda Rakyat), a subgroup of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). There were some 200 detainees, but only two bathrooms with dirty, muddy floors for them to use.

The Kalong team resorted to all methods to get confessions for further interrogation. Very often the interrogators used a detainee against another or made an inmate their 'spy.' The confession being sought concerned the networks and the individuals

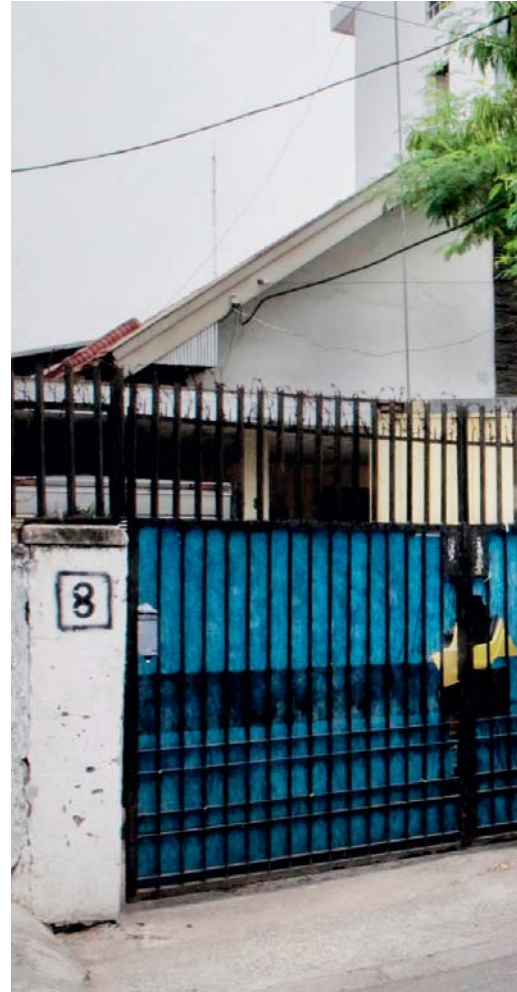
known to those interrogated.

Torture, which was the usual method of extracting information, consisted of electrocution, beatings, trampling with military boots, and whipping the backs of detainees with the tail of a stingray. "Electrocution took about five minutes. The pain in the forearm was unbearable," Juwito told *Tempo*.

Former political detainee Tan Swie Ling in the book *G30S 1965: Cold War and Destruction of Nationalism* described the 80 sadistic lashes with a stingray tail experienced by his close friend. The man who was arrested along with PKI Secretary-General Sudisman by the Kalong, revealed another favorite torture method, the *ayat kursi*, in which the toes were placed under the feet of a chair on which the interrogating officer sat. (*Ayat kursi* originally is a Qur'anic verse. *Kursi* is chair in Indonesian.)

Syaiful said that torture was an option, since the interrogating officers were completely in the dark about PKI cadres and the organization. "Just imagine, they had to question so many people with minimum preparations and knowledge," said the former resident of Buru Island. "They didn't even have an office that they looked like the *becak* drivers' office."

The Kalong Team was formed by the





Jakarta Military Region Command V in 1966. Their mission was to capture, interrogate and classify the people according to the gravity of the charges of their involvement with the PKI and the murder of the seven generals, regarded as heroes of the 1965 rebellion.

The official name of the team was unknown, and why it was called Kalong. But it was well-known, its name often appearing in newspapers for its record in arresting people. Kalong was headed by Major Suroso and Capt. Rosadi. One of the interrogators was Capt. Syafei.

Even though it was not the only intelligence task force in Jakarta, Kalong was famous for its ruthlessness. It was this team that questioned the most suspects. There were other intelligence units, the Kebayoran Lama Intel Task Force, commanded by Cecep at the former office of the Infico Film Studio; the Tanah Abang Intel Task Force under Major Endang Surawan, headquartered in the former Chinese newsagency *Xinhua* office; the Kramat 5 Intel Task Force at the former campus of the People's University (Universitas Rakyat). "Kalong existed until 1974," he said.

Of all the task force chiefs, apparently Cecep was the most powerful. Syaiful said he could take a detainee from any task

▲ **Former Kalong headquarters**  
on Jalan Gunung Sahari II No. 8,  
Central Jakarta.

force for subsequent interrogation at his headquarters. Kebayoran Lama was indeed focused more on making a profound study of the detainees regarded as leading PKI figures. "Cecep's military rank was not clear. At times he wore a corporal's insignia, at other times he wore the rank of a brigadier-general," he said.

Arrests, which might lead to the torture and even the death of people suspected to have links with the PKI, were made in a systematic manner. This job was done by state personnel, chiefly the military, at all levels, both at the center and the regions. There was no objection or opposition from other state administrators, such as parliament and the judiciary.

The second wave of the mopping-up operations after the 30 September 1965 events took place in 1968. East Java's Military Regional Command—Kodam VIII/Brawijaya—for instance, carried out operation Trisula in July 1968 to wipe out South Blitar as a PKI stronghold. In his August 9, 1968, press statement in Malang, Kodam Brawijaya chief Maj. Gen. M. Jasim announced the success of the Trisula

operation which was backed by combat and intelligence troops.

Jasin revealed his skill of interrogating the local PKI leaders, using death threats. "...I will shoot you dead with my greatest respect to your consistent stance of defending the [communist] party ideology," he said, as quoted in the book *Brawidjaja Operation Trisula Destroys the New-Style PKI*.

TNI Commander Agus Suhartono refused to comment much regarding the post-1965 large-scale operations, including the Kalong team. He used the pretext of not knowing what the situation was at that time, claiming he should study it first. Nonetheless, Agus felt there was no need to speak of the past, in the interest of averting public unrest. "Let bygones be bygones. That's part of our history," he said at Halim Perdanakusumah Airfield in East Jakarta, two weeks ago. "Let us take a step forward."

The National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) referred to the role of the Kopkamtib (Operation for the Restoration of Security and Order), which investigated the September 30, 1965 Movement. This command was formed by President Sukarno with his then chief commander, Maj. Gen. Suharto.

Later on, Kopkamtib reportedly committed crimes against humanity, like murder, mass destruction, slavery, eviction, deprivation of freedom, torture, rapes, abuses, and abductions. About 3 million people suspected of being PKI sympathizers have been reported dead as a result. "Kopkamtib is most responsible for such gross violations of human rights," Nur Kholis, head of the Investigating Team for 1965 Cases and a member of Komnas HAM, told *Tempo*, two weeks ago.

Kopkamtib continued its operations after Suharto became president. This institution was structured in its organization from the central level down to the regional levels. Its job was to identify, arrest and detain people. Very few of those detained were tried in a court of law. Nevertheless, Komnas HAM does not possess authentic documents, such as specific orders. "We have statements from former political detainees," says Nur Kholis.

Usually, the victims simply got an acquittal letter from their prison or from banishment. There have never been detention or arrest warrants. "When I was released from Buru Island, the letter simply said, 'Not involved in G30S/PKI,'" says Syaiful bitterly. ●





1965 EXECUTIONERS

# ANWAR CONGO

For the first time in the history of Indonesian film, a movie documenting the confessions of a mass killer has emerged. His name is Anwar Congo, a thug who lived by scalping tickets at Medan's movie theaters. In the *The Act of Killing*, a film directed by Joshua Oppenheimer, he relives the slaughter he once committed almost 50 years ago.

The film shows Anwar's realization of what it was like to be a killer and how it would be if he were a victim. When *The Act of Killing* was screened at the Toronto Film Festival, the media in the West called it harrowing and soul-shaking because Anwar looked proud of his deeds. Will the film change the way Indonesians see the period known as the nation's dark days?

Scene from *The Act of Killing*.

CARLOS ARANGO DE MONTIS/THEACTOFKILLING.COM





# DOCUMENTING MASS MURDERERS

THE DOCUMENTARY *THE ACT OF KILLING* CREATED SHOCK WAVES AT THE TORONTO FILM FESTIVAL. HOW DID JOSHUA OPPENHEIMER MEET THE KILLERS OF COMMUNISTS IN SUMATRA AND ACQUAINT HIMSELF WITH ANWAR CONGO?

**I**T was at the Telluride Film Festival in Colorado, USA, last September. As soon as the screening of the documentary *The Act of Killing* (*Jagal*) ended, a woman rushed to meet Joshua Oppenheimer, the film's director.

It appeared that the woman had just finished crying. She told Oppenheimer, "Your movie isn't just about Indonesia. It's about all of us."

A week after the Colorado screening, the film was premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in Canada, held September 6-16. A number of the media praised the movie, calling it one of the favorites among

300 films screened at the festival. The movie was also rated as harrowing and unsettling.

The film is the story of Anwar Congo, a thug hanging around Medan movie theaters, who in his youth during 1965-1966 mercilessly butchered Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) members in his hometown. In the film, the audience can see how Anwar candidly recounts his own brutality.



HOW did Oppenheimer manage to find Sumatra and later meet with Anwar Congo? Oppenheimer landed in Sumatra in

2001. At that time he was making a documentary on oil palm plantation laborers in the Matapao region of Serdang Bedagai in North Sumatra.

"I wanted to shed light on their problems, like the difficulties of forming a labor union," he recalled.

Oppenheimer related how he stumbled on interesting information during the making of the documentary. The laborers, it turned out, were living next to many people who during the 1965-1966 period, murdered laborers who were PKI members. "They lived next door to butchers who slaughtered their own fathers, uncles and

◀ **Pekan Minggu market**, Pematang Setrak village, near Simpang Matapao.

aunts,” he said.

On one occasion, Oppenheimer had a chance to chat with one of the butchers, who recounted in sickening detail how he killed members of the labor union who were affiliated with the PKI. “Imagine, he talked in front of his 9-year-old granddaughter,” Oppenheimer said.

Oppenheimer admitted he was stunned by the candidness of the person. Later, after completing the documentary on the plantation workers, he went back to his home in the UK. But he decided to make a film about the executioners, and returned to Matapao in 2004.

In February that year, he started filming the story of Amir Hasan, a former leader of an execution squad, who lived in Mengkudu Bay subdistrict in Serdang Bedagai. Amir turned out to be a writer, and he recorded his experiences of slaying PKI members in Mengkudu Bay in a 100-page stenciled book titled *Embun Berdarah* (*Bloody Morning Dew*). The book in which Amir detailed the Mengkudu Bay killings was later given to Oppenheimer.

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LAST Friday, *Tempo* traveled from Medan by car heading east for about two hours to meet Amir Hasan, but the writer had died three years ago. His youngest son, Zulfansyah, claimed no knowledge of his father’s writing about what happened in Mengkudu Bay during 1965-1966. He was suspicious of *Tempo*’s visit.

*Tempo* managed to obtain a stenciled copy of *Embun Berdarah* from Yohana, 59, a relative of Amir. “This is a story about our village,” she said. Amir noted in the book that there were 702 people affiliated with the PKI around the Mengkudu Bay district in 1965. He included the list of people along with the sub-organizations they belonged to, such as the Indonesian Farmers Front, Indonesian Plantation Laborers Union, Indonesian Women’s Movement and the People’s Youth.

Amir wrote that he and his mates took PKI members detained in Tanjung Kasau prison. He wrote as follows: “On February 22,

1966, at 10pm, they beheaded a PKI member named Tris whom they seized from Tanjung Kasau prison. One of his partners, Marik, executed him... Tris’s head was severed from his body.

*Tempo* also met with a Mengkudu Bay resident named Maeran who knew Amir. Maeran used to be one of Amir’s men in those days. He recounted that the operation was controlled from a guard post in Simpang Matapao at the intersection of Sumatra’s eastern crossroads and the road leading to Pematang Setrak. “We always met there,” he said.

Haji Saim, 83, who lived in Sei Bamban subdistrict, Serdang Bedagai, told *Tempo* that almost every morning he would hear news of a corpse by the river which became a public spectacle. “Well, I heard them but I didn’t want to see them,” he said.

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AFTER filming Amir Hasan’s story, Oppenheimer met with many other former executioners. In 2005, he got acquainted with Anwar Congo. Anwar was known as a thug at movie theaters. He used to control the ticket scalping ring at the Medan Movie Theater.

Oppenheimer found evidence that members of the execution squad in Medan in 1965 were generally recruited from among movie theater thugs, who had it in for the leftists for boycotting American films. At that time, tickets for American films idolized by many Medan residents were most profitable for the scalpers. There was even a James Dean fans club that had many followers who dressed and acted like the American film star. The boycott on American movies meant less income for the hustlers at the theater.

Oppenheimer was also introduced to Adi Zulkadry, Anwar’s close friend, way back from their teenage years. Together with Adi and several other friends, Anwar captured, kidnapped, interrogated, tortured, murdered and later disposed of the bodies. They formed a death squad called Frog Army which later became well-known and feared in Medan.

The squad was coordinated by the Pancasila Youth, a wing of the Indonesian Independence Pioneers founded by General A.H. Nasution. Anwar can be called one

of the founders and seniors of the wing. Adi Zulkadry himself was once active and acted as treasurer for the North Sumatra chapter. However, due to personal conflicts with other members, he left the organization. Nonetheless, his friendship with Anwar never faltered.

“I introduced myself to them as a film director with the desire to make a documentary about their life experiences and the history of the crackdown on the PKI during 1965-1966,” Oppenheimer explained. He said, during the shooting, sometimes Anwar would express his fear for revenge from the victims’ families. Yet, he was also convinced that he and his regime in Indonesia have created such a powerful sense of fear and submissiveness that the victims’ families would not take retaliatory action.

Oppenheimer said that in each phase of the filmmaking process, starting from interviews until the actual shooting, he always discussed and explained to the crew about what they were working on and the purpose. “The approach I took actually placed me more in the role of a facilitator and technical supervisor,” he explained.

He explained that the ideas of how scenes should be made or what costumes should be worn came more from the actors themselves. *The Act of Killing* is not a film based on a script or a given outline, but rather on capturing candid, spontaneous or even unexpected emotional moments. “My only capital is patience and I let the camera roll,” he mused.

To help Anwar pour out his imagination, Oppenheimer introduced him to his old friend, Ibrahim Sinik, the owner of the *Medan Post* daily—Anwar used the first floor of the newspaper’s office for his killings. (Ibrahim Sinik himself once produced a film titled *Batas Impian* (*Edge of a Dream*) in 1970, starring Camelia Malik as the supporting actress.)

“I don’t blame Anwar. I thank him for his honesty. The making of this film, nevertheless, went through a painful process,” Oppenheimer told *Tempo*. He said that the response from the audience at the Toronto and Telluride festivals who were touched by the film meant much to him. “Through the audience, I could relieve my pain which I felt in the past few years while filming Anwar’s story,” he added. ●