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“Down to the Very Roots”: The Indonesian Army’s Role in the Mass Killings of 1965–66

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ABSTRACT

This article makes the case that the anticommunist violence of 1965–66 in Indonesia was neither inevitable nor spontaneous, but was encouraged, facilitated, directed and shaped by the Indonesian army leadership. It develops that argument in three parts. It shows first how the temporal and geographical variations in the pattern of mass killing corresponded closely to the varied political postures and capacities of army commanders in different locales, and how the mass violence everywhere depended on the army’s substantial logistical assets. Next, it outlines how the army encouraged and directed mass killings by mobilizing militia groups and death squads, and encouraging them to detain and kill members of the PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia—Indonesian Communist Party) and its allies. Third, it describes how the army provoked and legitimized mass violence by launching a sophisticated media and propaganda campaign that blamed the PKI for the kidnap and murder of six army generals on 1 October 1965, and called for the party and its affiliates to be physically annihilated. The army had allies in this effort, none more enthusiastic than the anticommunist religious and political leaders who fanned the flames of hatred and violence by allusions to long-standing religious and cultural differences. Mass violence was also fuelled by the wider international context of the Cold War and by the acts and omissions of key foreign powers. But without the army’s orchestrated campaign to cast the PKI as evil, without the conscious decision to effect its physical annihilation, and without the mobilization of the army’s considerable organizational and logistical capacity to carry out that decision, it is unlikely that any of those long-standing tensions or external forces would ever have given rise to violence of such staggering breadth and brutality.

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Introduction

Those who have examined the mass anticommunist violence of 1965–66 in Indonesia have offered a wide range of explanations for it, focusing variously on psychological and socio-psychological dynamics, cultural and religious divisions, socioeconomic conflicts and international meddling. Indeed, the available scholarship is now so rich that it is possible to draw upon it to develop a more comprehensive account of the violence and its

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legacies.¹ This article forms part of a larger project that aims to do just that.² More specifically, it seeks answers to a number of analytical puzzles about the Indonesian violence that have remained elusive. What accounts for its distinctive geographical and temporal patterns and variations? That is, why was the violence concentrated in certain regions—Bali, Aceh, Central Java, East Java and North Sumatra—and why did it begin and end at markedly different times in different parts of the country? Why, despite these variations, did the violence take broadly similar forms across the country? Why, for example, did vigilantes or death squads everywhere play such a central role? Why did the violence so often seem to pit one social, cultural or religious group against another? And why were methods like disappearance, bodily mutilation, corpse display and sexual violence so common? Finally, and perhaps most importantly, who was ultimately responsible for the violence?

Some part of the answer to these questions lies in the personal and social psychology of the killers, and in the long-standing cultural and socioeconomic tensions that tore at Indonesian society in 1965. Some part also lies, no doubt, in the deeply polarized politics of the period, amplified by the wider political context of the Cold War, and the support and encouragement given to anticommunist forces by major powers. And yet, when one considers the violence in its totality—its distinctive patterns and variations—it becomes clear that these explanations fall short. Perhaps most importantly, accounts that locate the roots of violence in personal psychology, long-standing cultural and socioeconomic tensions, and international context tend to divert attention from more immediate political processes and human agency. In that way, they obscure rather than enhance our understanding of what happened, and leave unanswered the crucial question of responsibility.

Against that backdrop, this article makes the case that the violence of 1965–66 cannot be properly understood without recognizing the pivotal role of the army leadership in provoking, facilitating and organizing it.³ In making that claim, I do not mean to suggest that the army single-handedly carried out all the killings, or that it acted alone; that was not the case. It faced pressure from a variety of social, religious and political groups for “firm action” against the left, and the success of its campaign depended on the often willing collaboration of a great many Indonesian civilians. Nor am I claiming that cultural, religious and socioeconomic factors were of no importance; clearly they were. They provided real and imagined reasons for grievance against the PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia—Indonesian Communist Party) and its affiliates, as well as some of the language and symbolism through which those grievances were expressed. Nor, finally, do I mean to suggest that powerful international actors like the United States and the United Kingdom played no role in facilitating or fomenting the violence; unquestionably they did. What I am arguing, rather, is that—whatever underlying religious, cultural and socioeconomic conflicts may have existed in October 1965, however willing ordinary Indonesians were to join the fray, and no matter how permissive the international context may have been—the resort to mass killing and detention was neither inevitable nor spontaneous, but was encouraged, facilitated, directed and shaped by the army’s leadership. In other words, without army leadership, the events of October 1965 would never have resulted in mass violence of such astonishing breadth and intensity.

This article develops that argument in three parts. It shows first how the temporal and geographical variations in the pattern of mass killing corresponded closely to the varied political postures of army commanders in a given locale, and how the army’s logistical assets facilitated the killings. That close correlation strongly suggests that, all other

considerations aside, the posture and organizational capacity of the army leadership in a given area was a critical factor in triggering and sustaining the mass killings. Next, it outlines how the army encouraged and carried out the mass violence by mobilizing militia groups and death squads, and encouraging them to identify, detain and kill members of the PKI and their allies. The close relationship between the army and these groups belies the common claim that the killers acted spontaneously on the basis of religious or other “deeply rooted” impulses. Third, the article describes how the army provoked and legitimized mass violence by launching a sophisticated media and propaganda campaign that blamed the PKI for the kidnap and murder of six army generals on 1 October 1965, and called for the party and its affiliates to be physically annihilated. Finally, it draws on this evidence to address the critical question of responsibility.

Although the aim of this article is primarily to provide a more systematic and convincing account of the Indonesian violence, I hope it might also contribute something to the study of mass violence and genocide more generally. At a minimum, I hope it will shed light on an instance of mass killing that has been largely neglected in the broader literature on genocide, and often misunderstood by those not familiar with modern Indonesian history. Perhaps more important, I believe it will highlight two rather common methodological and analytical pitfalls in the study of mass violence. The first is the problem of ascribing causal significance to purely local factors without sufficient reference to the supra-local dynamics and structures that condition them. This account of the Indonesian case shows how the analysis of wider national and structural influences is crucial to unravelling the causal logic of mass violence, and can offer a more fruitful and reliable approach to understanding its unique patterns and variations. The second problem, related to the first, is the tendency to see violence, including mass killing, as emerging somehow spontaneously “from below.” As I try to show here, such a view overlooks the fact that genocide and mass killing are inherently political acts, initiated by actors (people but also institutions) with political motives and objectives. That is to say, genocides do not simply happen—they are not the “natural” by-product of socioeconomic or cultural conflicts—but are the result of deliberate and conscious acts by political and military leaders. This insight, compellingly argued by Valentino, Straus, Fein and others, usefully shifts the focus away from purely psychological, cultural and social dynamics that explain popular participation and acquiescence in mass killing, to the intentional political acts of those in positions of authority who set mass killings in motion, and provide the means through which they can be carried out.⁴ That shift helps to train our attention on the structural conditions that permit mass killings to happen, and on the vital question of legal and political responsibility for such acts.

Temporal and Spatial Variations

Within a few days of the kidnap and murder of six top generals by the 30th September Movement on 1 October 1965, the army leadership under Major General Suharto set out to crush the Movement as well as the PKI and its affiliated organizations. It carried out that intention in a number of ways, none of them more important than the use of overwhelming armed force against the alleged perpetrators and hundreds of thousands of unarmed civilians. Without the army’s resort to armed force, and without access to its substantial logistical assets, the mass killings of 1965–66 could not, and would not, have happened.

Army Posture

Perhaps the clearest evidence of the army's central role in the killings was the uncanny relationship between the political disposition and capacity of army commanders in a given area and the timing and intensity of the violence there. That pattern makes clear that, far from being a spontaneous popular reaction to the treachery of the PKI, as the Suharto regime and its successors have always insisted, the killings were set in motion by the army leadership itself. It also suggests strongly that the marked geographical and temporal variations in the pattern of killings did not stem directly or inevitably from long-standing cultural, religious and socioeconomic tensions in a given locale but from the capacity of army commanders in each area to fuel and mobilize those tensions with a view to destroying the left.⁵ Their ability to do so was contingent on a number of other factors, including the willingness of civilian political and religious leaders to work with them, and their success in mobilizing anticommunist vigilante groups.

The close connection between the posture and capacity of army commanders and the killings in a given area is discernible in three distinct patterns. First, where the regional or sub-regional military command was united and had sufficient troops at its disposal, the killings were either swift and extensive, as in Aceh, or very limited, as in West Java. In Aceh, for example, the scene of the first mass killings, the military commander, Brigadier General Ishak Djuarsa, and his direct superior, Lt. General Ahmad Mokoginta, were united in their opposition to Sukarno and the PKI, and had ample troops loyal to them. They immediately embarked on an operation to "annihilate" the 30th September Movement and the PKI and carried it out with singular speed and efficiency. Thus, contrary to the conventional wisdom that the violence in Aceh was a kind of "holy war" driven by the anger of its deeply religious Muslim population, the available evidence now makes clear that the killings were part of a deliberate army operation to destroy the PKI.⁶

Meanwhile, in West Java, the regional military command under Brigadier General Ibrahim Adjie was also unified, and had sufficient troops available. And yet West Java saw relatively few killings. The decisive difference was that General Adjie decided *against* a strategy of mass killing, preferring a programme of mass arrest. Though an ardent anticommunist, Adjie had a deep personal loyalty to Sukarno and, unlike many of his fellow officers, he followed Sukarno's admonition not to resort to violence against the PKI. No doubt he was also reluctant to arm and empower Muslim villagers and militias so soon after defeating the troublesome Darul Islam rebellion in the province. Adjie explained his approach to the British military attaché and another British Embassy official in the course of a conversation in early February 1966. According to their account:

Adjie commented that it was not always necessary for blood to show. His tactics had been to put the leaders of the PKI in concentration camps, work on the masses to prove how the leaders had deceived them, and then let the leaders out ... Adjie was critical of the different tactics employed in East Java. The kind of internecine war that had gone on had been wrong and had left many wounds open ...⁷

Second, where the army command was politically divided, faced resistance or did not have sufficient troops at its disposal, the mass killing was delayed for some time, but then accelerated dramatically when the balance of forces tipped in favour of the anticommunist position. In North Sumatra, for example, both the regional military commander, Brigadier General Darjatmo, and the governor, Ulung Sitepu, were sympathetic to the left, and as

many as thirty per cent of troops were thought to have leftist sympathies.⁸ The result was a tense stalemate with anticommunist forces that delayed the onset of mass killings for more than a month. Thus, notwithstanding the deep-seated socioeconomic and political conflicts in the province, the killings did not begin there until a few days after 29 October, when Darjatmo was replaced by Brigadier General Sobiran, whom US officials described as “violently anticommunist.”⁹

Similarly, in Bali, where the regional military commander, Brigadier General Sjafiuddin, was a supporter of Sukarno and had the backing of the leftist Governor Sutedja, mass killings were forestalled for a full two months, and began only after both Sjafiuddin and Sutedja had been sidelined. Thereafter, they spread rapidly, resulting in the death of some eighty thousand people in a little over three months.¹⁰ In East Java, too, where the regional military commander, Brigadier General Basoeki Rachmat, had limited troops at his disposal and not much confidence in their loyalty, mass killings did not begin in earnest until early November.¹¹ Like Sjafiuddin, Brigadier General Rachmat had a reputation as a Sukarnoist, and was removed from his post just as the mass killings got underway. Meanwhile, in Flores, where the sub-regional military commander had been reluctant to support the anticommunist campaign, mass killings did not begin until February 1966—after he had been replaced by a more compliantly anticommunist officer.¹² In each of these cases, then, mass killings were delayed until the relevant army commander (and civilian officials) had been removed or replaced.

Third, in areas where there was no consensus within the military leadership or where loyalist troop strength was insufficient, the onset of mass killings coincided with, or immediately followed, the deployment of troops loyal to General Suharto from outside the command area. The most notorious of those troops were from the elite RPKAD (Resimen Para-Komando Angkatan Darat—Army Para-Commando Regiment). As I have argued elsewhere with respect to Bali, and others have demonstrated for Central Java, the mass killings in these contested areas coincided closely with the arrival of these elite mobile forces. Units of the RPKAD were first deployed from Jakarta to Central Java, where some elements of the army had shown open support for the 30th September Movement. Arriving in the provincial capital, Semarang, on 18 October, they quickly set about crushing all possible support for the Movement and the PKI and in the process gained a reputation for extraordinary brutality. Summarizing their actions, Jenkins and Kammen write:

In the months ahead, at the behest of Suharto, [the RPKAD commander] Sarwo Edhie was to instigate a reign of terror and mass murder in Central Java, crushing both the September 30th Movement and the PKI, and tipping the uncertain political balance decisively in the army's favour.¹³

With their task in Central Java accomplished, the RPKAD troops returned to Jakarta in late November.¹⁴

Finally, in early December, RPKAD troops arrived in Bali where there had been almost no killings in the two months after the events of 1 October. Within days of their arrival, the killings quickly reached levels comparable to or worse than in the other areas.¹⁵ The conventional wisdom is that the violence in Bali spread spontaneously and became so “frenzied” that when crack troops arrived from Java in December their main job was to stop it. In fact, virtually all of the evidence indicates that RPKAD forces together with

political party authorities orchestrated and incited violence in Bali, as they did in Java and in Aceh.¹⁶

Guns, Trucks and Hit Lists

Although the killings were largely carried out with very simple weapons, and did not rely on elaborate modern technologies, like all mass killings they required planning and logistical support. The army played a crucial role in providing both, even if it sometimes did so by mobilizing the local population or confiscating its assets. Indeed, it is safe to say that, without the army's logistical and organizational leadership, the mass killings could not have happened, or at least would not have been nearly as swift and widespread as they were.

The army's logistical role took a number of forms. The first, and most obvious, was the provision of guns to its own soldiers and its militia allies. Guns were not the only means used in killing—machetes, knives, bamboo spears and swords were also common—but they were important in projecting the army's power. The display and use of high-powered firearms, for example, were crucial aspects of the “show of force” strategy employed by the RPKAD and other army units. So too were armoured personnel carriers and tanks. A US Embassy cable from November 1965 provides a glimpse of that strategy, gleaned from an official army account of the killing of nine alleged members of the PKI-affiliated women's organization Gerwani in Central Java:

Army info bureau also reported that Para-commandos (RPKAD) in armored vehicles entering city of Surakarta ... were blocked in village at outskirts by nine “witches” from PKI women's affiliate Gerwani, who insulted them and refused to let them pass. After asking them quietly to give way, and firing into the air, [RPKAD] para-commandos were “forced by their intransigence to terminate breathing of these nine Gerwani witches.”¹⁷

Firearms were also important in lending authority to the local allies the army empowered to round up and kill PKI members. These included the civil defence units, known as Hansip (Pertahanan Sipil—Civil Defence) and Hanra (Pertahanan Rakyat—People's Defence), which were mobilized down to the village level across the country. According to one recently discovered document, Hansip and Hanra units in North Aceh were provided with rifles and automatic weapons for the specific purpose of assisting in the campaign to “exterminate the G30S.”¹⁸ Given the fact that Hansip and Hanra were part of a national civil defence apparatus, it is reasonable to assume that units in other parts of the country were also supplied with weapons.

Equally important were the trucks and other vehicles the army provided for the transport of soldiers and vigilante killers and their victims. Accounts and photographic evidence from virtually every corner of the country point to the transportation of suspects, bound and tied, in open-backed vehicles, to sites of detention and killing. Many of the trucks belonged to the army itself, while others were commandeered from private citizens as part of the army campaign. In the town of Negara, Bali, eyewitnesses reported that dozens of army trucks, loaded with alleged communists picked up from surrounding villages, formed a slow and orderly procession down the main street for several days. At a large warehouse the prisoners were unloaded one by one, hands bound, and taken inside, where they were shot with automatic weapons. In the course of three days in December, an estimated six thousand were killed.¹⁹ An article in Bali's local newspaper

in the second week of December 1965 declared that “they don’t even need to see the red beret [of the RPKAD], it is enough simply to hear the roar of the truck, and the hearts of the big-shot G-30-S types begin to beat wildly with fear.”²⁰

Many accounts also mention the existence of lists on the basis of which victims were targeted for arrest or execution. Reporting a conversation with Ross Taylor, an English engineer living in Pasuruan, East Java, a British Embassy official wrote in December 1965 that the engineer had given him “horrifying details of the purges that have been taking place at the Nebritext factory in the village of Pasuruan,” where Taylor lived.

The local army commander, [Taylor] told me, has a list of PKI figures in five categories. He has been given orders to kill those in the first three categories. So far, some 2,000 people have been killed in the environs, starting with those living nearest the main roads, and working outwards ... In the factory itself about 200 have been liquidated.²¹

In some cases, such lists were prepared by the army and then passed along to vigilantes with orders to kill those named, or to select those that should be killed. According to a Banser leader from Kediri, for example,

what usually happened was that Banser would receive a list of PKI detainees from the District Military Command headquarters (Kodim) with the instruction to choose who among the detainees should be executed. So, the killings were done in accordance with the law ...²²

Likewise, a former vigilante group member from Aceh testified that “we only picked up people we knew were definitely PKI ... we read their names on a list made up by the leadership.”²³ Elsewhere, army authorities sought and secured the acquiescence of local religious and political party leaders in compiling and vetting death lists.²⁴

Such procedures, and the lists themselves, were a sure sign that the killings were planned and premeditated, and not the result of a sudden frenzy. Indeed, those procedures and lists were almost certainly part of the system for “cleansing” political suspects that was set up by the army shortly after 1 October. Under that system, suspects were placed by military officials in one of several broad categories according to their alleged degree of involvement in the 30th September Movement. The classification system was spelled out in a decree issued by General Suharto on President Sukarno’s authority on 15 November, and so had the force of law.²⁵

Finally, the army provided or seized the places of detention in which many suspects were held, and where some died under torture, or from which they were transported to a killing field. In addition to small local jails and larger prisons, the places of detention included military camps and buildings, as well as sports stadiums, warehouses and private homes confiscated from their owners by the army. In some parts of the country, the army also established concentration camps to house the ever-expanding numbers of detainees. These logistical assets became an essential part of the infrastructure of mass killing.

Militia Groups and Death Squads

Of course, the army did not act alone. On the contrary, because of lingering uncertainty about the loyalty and capacity of some military units and officers, and also to cover its tracks, the army leadership sought allies wherever it could find them. Chief among those allies were leaders of the ardently anticommunist political parties, like NU, PNI,

IPKI and Partai Katolik, and their respective mass organizations.²⁶ Crucially, the army also formed alliances with, and mobilized, a variety of armed vigilante groups and militia forces, deploying them in a coordinated campaign of violence against the left.

Mass organizations had been actively involved in politics for some years before the events of October 1965, and they were ripe for quick mobilization afterwards. That was especially true of the religious and political party youth organizations, which had been engaged in increasingly bitter and occasionally violent conflict with PKI-affiliated groups since at least 1963. It was to these groups that the army turned in its campaign against the PKI and its allies. What changed after 1 October 1965 was that the mass organizations began to work more closely and more openly with the army than ever before—coordinating plans for demonstrations, declarations and “sweeping” actions. With explicit and tacit army support, these mass organizations were mobilized to demand action against the “traitors” who had killed the generals, providing the army with a useful rationale for taking “firm action” against the PKI, on the grounds that “the people demand it.” In the course of those actions, they committed in acts of violence, including the destruction of homes and offices, looting, beating and, eventually, mass detention and killing.

The earliest expression of this new cooperation was an umbrella group of militant anticommunist mass organizations, known as KAP-Gestapu (Komando Aksi Pengganyangan Gerakan September Tiga Puluh—Action Command to Crush the 30th September Movement). The participating mass organizations included those affiliated with the NU, IPKI and the Catholic Party, among others. Although ostensibly an independent civilian body, KAP-Gestapu was set up on the initiative of the army leadership²⁷—with financial assistance later provided covertly by the US government²⁸—and effectively served as an anticommunist political action command for the army. Once KAP-Gestapu had been established, many more coordinating bodies and “action fronts” were set up, in each case with the support of army authorities.

Even more important in fuelling the violence and killings, however, were the anticommunist vigilante groups that were mobilized after 1 October. Most of these groups were directly affiliated with political parties—such as NU’s Ansor and Banser, the PNI’s Pemuda Marhaen and IPKI’s Pemuda Pancasila. Other units, such as Hansip and Hanra, were part of the existing civil defence apparatus. After 1 October, all of these groups became, in effect, anticommunist militias. It was to these groups, and their leaders, that the army turned to identify and locate local PKI leaders and members. It was they who surrounded the houses of alleged leftists at night, who angrily demanded their arrest, who destroyed their property and burned their houses. And it was they who made up the death squads that tracked down and detained alleged leftists, took them to sites of detention and joined in killing them. There is no firm indication of how many joined these militia groups, but it must have been in the hundreds of thousands. According to a US Embassy cable from mid November 1965, in the Solo area alone “the army was training and equipping some 24 thousand Moslem youth for action against communists.”²⁹ Likewise, the districts of East Aceh and North Aceh were each reported to have some fifteen thousand militia members.³⁰

The relationship between these groups and the army has been the subject of much speculation and discussion over the years. Some observers have embraced, or inadvertently lent credence to, the official position that such groups acted on their own initiative, independently of the army, on the basis of long-standing local antipathies and conflicts.³¹

A more common position, around which there has until recently been something like a consensus, is that while in some areas vigilante groups operated at the army's behest, in many others they acted independently on the basis of local interests and conflicts.³²

It is now clear that this consensus view was mistaken and that, with very rare exceptions, these militia groups and death squads operated under army direction and control. Although there was some variation from one region to the next, the basic pattern was the same wherever the mass killings took place. Militias were mobilized, armed, trained and supported by the army, and more often than not, carried out the arrests and the killings. That is not to say that the members of such groups were always simply following orders. Most had their own motives for cooperating with the army, including fear, peer pressure, anger and sincerely held religious or ideological beliefs. But that does not mean their involvement in mass killings was spontaneous or inevitable. Indeed, in virtually every case, they engaged in killing only after being given the green light, or being prodded to action, by the army. A few examples from different parts of the country make this clear.

In a report from early November 1965, a senior US Embassy official described the army's strategy as it had been explained to him by an Indonesian army contact:

In Central Java army (RPKAD) is training Moslem youth and supplying them with weapons and will keep them out in front against the PKI. Army will try to avoid as much as it can safely do so direct confrontation with the PKI ...³³

And as the RPKAD commander, Sarwo Edhie, told a journalist:

We decided to encourage the anticommunist civilians to help with the job. In Solo we gathered together the youth, the nationalist groups, the religious organizations. We gave them two or three days' training, then sent them out to kill communists.³⁴

Internal army documents confirm, in somewhat more circuitous language, that the mobilization of the population to attack the PKI was a deliberate strategy. An army history of the campaign against the PKI in Central Java, for example, says:

In order to defeat the PKI tactic of arousing the mass of its followers in a campaign of terror and disruption, the government itself mobilized the mass of the people. The RPKAD gave military training, including instruction in the use of weapons and techniques for securing villages, as part of a general programme of cooperation between the army and the people to crush the remnants of the G30S/PKI.³⁵

Further evidence of the cooperation between the army and the militias in East Java comes from the accounts of militia members and commanders themselves. A history of the campaign by the NU's militia group, Banser, to "crush" the PKI in East Java offers a rare, and disturbing, glimpse into that world. Two patterns stand out clearly. First, local Banser commanders repeatedly mention that their men received military training from elite army units, such as the Raiders, Brimob (Brigade Mobil—Mobile Brigade) and the RPKAD, and that this training gave them an important advantage in their efforts to crush the PKI.³⁶ A commander in Banyuwangi, for example, noted that Banser "quietly strengthened its forces by undertaking military training with RPKAD instructors."³⁷ Second, Banser leaders describe how, at the end of October 1965, the army informed them that the arrest and killing of PKI members could only be done with formal army permission.³⁸ According to one Ansor member from Turen, Malang, for example, "Orders to

kill PKI members came from ABRI (Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia - Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia). The transfer of PKI detainees to Banser units was always accompanied by an official order."³⁹

The same basic pattern was reported from North Sumatra. As Ken Young writes, "... the army encouraged local youth groups in the capital city (Medan) to murder their communist rivals. The youth squads here were Muslim, Catholic, and Pemuda Panca Sila."⁴⁰ According to US officials in Medan in December 1965, "Sumatra military officer reported that army, while counseling public restraint, is actually encouraging Moslems to kill all PKI cadres, and that hundreds are being killed every day in North Sumatra."⁴¹ A death squad commander responsible for many executions in the vicinity of the Snake River near Medan similarly described the army's behind-the-scenes role:

They waited at the road with the truck. They didn't come down here [to the river bank] ... They called this "the people's struggle" so they kept their distance. If the army was seen doing [the killing] the world would be angry.⁴²

Likewise, in Bali, the army worked closely with civilians and militia groups in carrying out the killing. The main vigilante group was the PNI-affiliated Pemuda Marhaen, but the NU's Ansor was also active in some parts of the island. Sometimes the army took the lead. According to the journalist John Hughes, after the troops had arrived from Java, "the military and police got together with civilian authorities and made sure the right people were being executed. People were ... arrested and, usually, shot by the soldiers."⁴³ In other cases, the job of killing was delegated to villagers. Hughes writes: "Sometimes villages were specifically assigned to purge themselves of their Communists. Then took place communal executions as the village gathered its Communists together and clubbed or knifed them to death."⁴⁴

The evidence from Aceh points to a similar pattern, and provides definitive proof that the main militia groups were officially sanctioned.⁴⁵ Those groups included the Front Pembela Panca Sila (Pancasila Defenders Front), formally established in Banda Aceh on 6 October 1965 and in West Aceh a few days later; and the Pembela Rakyat (People's Defenders) formed in South Aceh in the first half of October.⁴⁶ As in Bali, the killings in Aceh were sometimes carried out by the army itself, and sometimes by the death squads operating under army supervision. In virtually every case, the killings began shortly after the regional military commander, Brigadier General Ishak Djuarsa, and other senior officials arrived in a district and exhorted the population to take action against the PKI. John Bowen recounts the aftermath of one such visit to Takengon in early October:

On each evening for the next few weeks men and women were seized from their homes, taken to the [Takengon] jail, and then driven to secluded spots along the road to the north coast and executed ... The army carried out the killings but ordered boys and young men to join the arrests. "The government wanted us to be out in front, to give them a way out later on," said one sub-district civil defense commander ...⁴⁷

In short, the evidence now available from a wide range of locales suggests that, with very few exceptions, militia forces and vigilantes operated under explicit army control, especially when it came to killings.⁴⁸ That case, long accepted for Central Java, is now very strong for other parts of the country as well, including Aceh and Bali. This is significant because, according to conventional wisdom, it was precisely in those areas (Aceh and Bali)

that the local populations had clearly taken the initiative, had “run amok,” and that the army’s role had been to stop the violence. It is now clear that this picture was untrue, and that the claims of popular and spontaneous violence were, in fact, deliberate lies concocted and spread by the very army officers who orchestrated the killings.⁴⁹

Language, Media and Propaganda

The idea of killing and detaining members of the PKI and the left did not emerge spontaneously. On the contrary, it was encouraged and facilitated by the army leadership through language calculated to create an atmosphere of hostility and fear in which killing anyone associated with the PKI appeared not only morally justifiable but a patriotic and religious duty.⁵⁰ That language spread rapidly across the archipelago, partly through the army-controlled newspapers and television, but also through radio, and countless mass rallies, demonstrations, ceremonies, declarations, sermons and face-to-face meetings. In the resulting atmosphere of anticommunist hysteria, existing conflicts over politics, religion, culture and land were easily ignited.⁵¹

“Down to the Very Roots”

Several aspects of this official media and propaganda campaign were especially important in fomenting violence against the PKI. First, it was extraordinarily bellicose. High-ranking army officers, including Major General Suharto, declared early on that the 30th September Movement and the PKI must be “smashed,” “crushed,” “buried,” “annihilated,” “wiped out,” “exterminated” and “destroyed down to the very roots.” And, like so many campaigns that have led to genocide, the actions against the culprits were repeatedly described as “cleansing” operations and “sweeping.”

In a national radio broadcast at 10:10 p.m. on 1 October 1965, Major General Suharto first used the phrases that would be repeated many thousands of times over the coming months and years, and used as justification for violence against the PKI. “Dear listeners,” Suharto said:

It is clear that the actions [of the 30th September Movement] were counter-revolutionary and must be destroyed down to the very roots. We have no doubt that with the full assistance of the progressive and revolutionary population, the counter-revolutionary 30th September Movement will be crushed to bits.⁵²

Almost immediately, military, religious and political figures across the country began to mimic the army’s violent and exclusionary language. In a speech broadcast from Medan at midnight on 1 October, Lt. General Mokoginta declared that, “... in order to safeguard the State/Nation and the revolution, it is ordered that all members of the Armed Forces resolutely and completely annihilate this counter-revolution and all acts of treason down to the roots.”⁵³ An official statement from Aceh’s executive council, dated 4 October, went even further, proclaiming: “It is mandatory for the People to assist every attempt to completely annihilate the Counter-Revolutionary 30th September Movement along with its lackeys.”⁵⁴ At a mass rally in Jakarta on the same day, the NU vice-chairman, Z. E. Subchan, read out a statement on behalf of an anticommunist umbrella group, which read, in part:

We call upon all political parties and mass organizations ... to assist the Armed Forces in destroying the “counter-revolutionary September 30th Movement” down to its roots, and we are ready together with the Armed Forces ... to defend and safeguard the Pantjasila State ... to the last drop of our blood.⁵⁵

The same day, 4 October, General Suharto used the occasion of the exhumation of the generals’ decomposing bodies to point the finger of responsibility for their deaths directly at the PKI and its affiliates.⁵⁶ One day later, the NU leadership followed the army’s lead, naming the PKI as the culprits and warning that “every counter-revolutionary movement must immediately be eliminated down to its very roots”⁵⁷ At a mass rally in Bali in November 1965, the newly appointed anticommunist Bupati of Gianyar told a crowd of some 100,000 that “those who are not prepared to repent and who remain obstinate must be cut down to the very roots.”⁵⁸ Speaking to members of a student action front in Jakarta on 12 November, General Nasution said, “the PKI has clearly betrayed the state and nation ... and therefore we are obliged and duty bound to wipe them from the soil of Indonesia.”⁵⁹ Later, warning against the revival of the PKI in North Sumatra, General Mokoginta said:

We will be condemned by our children if the counter-revolutionary Gestapu [the army’s name for the G30S] were to occur again. In order to prevent that the PKI must be buried as deep as possible so that it cannot rise again from its grave to haunt the people.⁶⁰

Traitors and Whores

The army propaganda campaign also sought to cast the Movement and the PKI as barbaric, inhuman, morally base and evil, and sought to sow fear and anger towards them. In his remarks on the occasion of the generals’ exhumation, broadcast nationwide on state radio and television on 4 October, Suharto specifically implicated the PKI-affiliated women’s organization, Gerwani, and the party’s youth organization, Pemuda Rakyat, in the “barbaric actions” against the generals. The text of his speech appeared in army-controlled newspapers the following day alongside grisly photographs of the decomposing bodies of the slain generals. The funeral procession and ceremony for the dead generals, which took place on 5 October, and the funeral for Nasution’s young daughter the following day, provided further opportunities to vilify the alleged perpetrators.

In this heated atmosphere, the army coined the acronym “Gestapu” to describe the 30th September Movement. The term was clearly intended to equate the Movement with the “Gestapo” (the Nazi Secret State Police) and to invoke its connotations of arbitrary power and evil.⁶¹ Indeed, in a briefing to newspaper editors on 7 October 1965, the chief of the Army Information Centre, Brigadier General Subroto, explicitly alluded to that historical comparison, describing the 30th September Movement as a “Gestapo-like terror.”⁶² Recognizing the dangerous political ramifications of the term, and the devious objectives of those who coined it, President Sukarno insisted on using the term “Gestok,” an acronym for Gerakan Satu Oktober, or the 1st October Movement. But the term Gestapu prevailed.⁶³

In other ways as well, the army’s language routinely portrayed members of the PKI and its affiliates as beings outside the bounds of civilized, moral society—describing them as “traitors,” “devils,” “atheists,” “whores,” and “animals.” In a pattern seen in so many genocides, then, the army portrayed the Movement and the PKI, in Helen Fein’s apt phrase, as

“outside the universe of obligation of the perpetrator.”⁶⁴ In doing so, the army facilitated and encouraged acts of violence against them.

As the references to “devils” and “atheists” attest, moreover, the army’s propaganda invoked powerful religious norms and symbols. In his speech by the generals’ graveside on 5 October, General Nasution spoke of how the army had been “insulted” (*dihina*) and “slandered” (*difitnah*), and invoked Allah to provide guidance.⁶⁵ In the following days, the army-controlled press was thick with references to the “holy” task of the army and its allies in destroying the PKI. On 8 October, for example, the army newspaper *Angkatan Bersendjata* called for holy war: “The sword cannot be met by the Koran ... but must be met by the sword. The Koran itself says that whoever opposes you should be opposed as they oppose you.”⁶⁶ And on 14 October, the same paper editorialized: “God is with us because we are on the path that is right and that He has set for us.”⁶⁷ The same message was conveyed by army leaders outside the capital. In North Sumatra, General Mokoginta addressed the newly formed North Sumatra Muslim Joint Committee, “urging his audience to extend their organization down to the district and even village level in order to ‘undertake an Islamic offensive’ against the PKI.”⁶⁸

In no case, perhaps, were the intentions of this official vilification so clear, and the consequences so grave, as in the demonization of Gerwani, the women’s organization loosely affiliated with the PKI. In the days and weeks after the Movement fizzled, army propagandists and their allies circulated a story that the six generals had been sexually assaulted and mutilated before they were killed on the morning of 1 October.⁶⁹ The story, reported in the army-controlled press and then endlessly repeated, described in lurid detail how members of Gerwani had danced naked around the generals, before castrating them with razor blades and gouging their eyes out with ice-picks. Apart from casting the Gerwani women as inhuman “witches,” the story powerfully evoked male anxieties about castration. Moreover, as Saskia Wieringa has convincingly argued, it played on the particular anxieties of conservative Indonesian men for whom the ostensibly uncontrolled sexuality of Gerwani women—not to mention their autonomy and political engagement—represented an unacceptable threat to their patriarchal position and world view.⁷⁰

Before long, similar stories began to appear in places outside of Jakarta. In Bali, officials claimed that their interrogation of a senior Gerwani figure had revealed that members of the organization had been instructed to “sell” themselves to soldiers in order to obtain weapons for the PKI and, having done so, to murder and castrate the men they had seduced. The local paper dutifully reported:

It is clear from these revelations how base and depraved PKI plans were. After scraping as much profit as possible from their shameless sexual activities, Gerwani members were supposed to murder and at the same time cut off the genitals of their victims.⁷¹

Such stories were clearly intended to make Gerwani members, and the PKI generally, appear to be not merely political traitors but immoral, debauched and inhuman.

In all of these ways, the story seemed calculated to stir up deep hatred and fear of Gerwani, and thereby to provide both a powerful motivation and justification for acts of violence against them. The problem is that the story was false. Official autopsies performed on the generals confirmed that they had not been tortured or mutilated, a crucial fact that President Sukarno tried in vain to impress upon the population.⁷² More

troubling still, given the existence of these autopsies, it is certain that the top army officials, up to and including Major General Suharto, *knew at the time* that the story was false. The only possible conclusion to be drawn from these facts is that the army leadership deliberately concocted and disseminated the false story to impugn Gerwani, and to incite violence against its members.

Documents, Graves and Weapons

Meanwhile, the army had commenced “sweeping” actions that provided further opportunities for provocation and violence. In practice, “sweeping” meant raiding the offices and homes of PKI members and either beating or detaining them. In the course of those raids, the army and its civilian allies claimed to have discovered documents detailing PKI plans to annihilate anticommunists. These discoveries were breathlessly reported in the army-controlled press, where they were held up as evidence that the PKI had indeed been behind the Movement, and that it had planned to destroy its enemies and seize state power.

Soon enough, military, religious and political authorities across the country began to report similar discoveries, and to highlight them in mass rallies, sermons and declarations. In November, authorities in Bali claimed to have found documents implicating the local PKI, including a list of army men allegedly involved in an underground PKI.⁷³ Likewise, in dozens of speeches made in towns across Central Java, RPKAD commander Sarwo Edhie “announced the discovery of documents which, he claimed, revealed communist plans to massacre members of the ‘nationalist’ and ‘religious’ groups.”⁷⁴ And in Aceh, the head of the National Front claimed to have received an anonymous letter from the PKI with the ominous warning: “We will have revenge on Islamic Youth.”⁷⁵ Curiously, none of these documents was ever introduced as evidence in the political trials of PKI leaders and members that began in early 1966.

The army and its allies also reported the discovery of large holes, which they alleged had been dug by the PKI and its youth organization Pemuda Rakyat to serve as mass graves for their victims. As in the case of the documents, reports of large holes soon began to appear around the country, and the story quickly spread that they had been dug by the PKI to bury those they planned to kill.⁷⁶ Army authorities also claimed to have found the weapons that were to be used. The weapons included guns, allegedly of Chinese provenance, as well as knives, sickles, machetes and ice-picks. Although all but the guns were everyday tools that would be found in almost any home at the time, the army and its allies portrayed them in the most sinister light possible. Ice-picks, they said, were to be used by the PKI to gouge out the eyes of their victims, just as Gerwani had allegedly gouged out the eyes of the generals.

Whatever the truth of these claims about documents, killings, grave-like holes and weapons—and there is good reason to doubt them—army leaders, politicians and religious authorities seized upon them to spread the message that, in light of the PKI’s evil plans, there was no choice but to “kill or be killed.”⁷⁷ It is hard to believe that such language—especially coming from people in positions of authority—would not have incited or at least given licence to real acts of violence, including killing. Indeed, most accounts of the killings by perpetrators emphasize these discoveries as the reason why they had no choice but to crush the PKI.

Media War and Psy-War

As these examples make clear, a crucial avenue for the dissemination of the army's inflammatory language and propaganda were the mass media which, at the time, meant radio, print newspapers and, for a select few, television. The most important of these was probably radio because it reached into ordinary homes and offices across the country.⁷⁸ It was hardly surprising, then, that the Movement leaders first seized the national radio station, or that one of Suharto's first moves against them was to seize it back. But if radio was in some sense the most important medium, print newspapers were a close second because they were read by political and religious leaders who strongly influenced public opinion. It was therefore also natural that within twenty-four hours of the Movement's first actions the army had closed down virtually all of the country's newspapers, except those it owned or controlled.

The papers that were allowed to remain open, *Angkatan Bersendjata* and *Berita Yudha*, were controlled by the army itself. Before long, the army permitted other papers to publish, but always under the strictest control and "guidance" from the army information office. According to one prominent newspaper editor, he and others "were told in early October that the army was starting a campaign against the PKI and anyone printing information critical of that campaign would be considered an ally of the PKI. No neutrality was permitted."⁷⁹ In practice, then, the papers that were permitted to publish were either run by army officers or closely parroted official army statements. The main message was that the PKI was guilty of treason. As the British ambassador reported to London on 19 October 1965: "Certainly the press and radio which since the 2nd of October had been entirely in army hands has kept up a steady supply of reports and articles pointing up the guilt of the PKI."⁸⁰

How strange, then, that on 2 October—that is, *after* the 30th September Movement had collapsed—the PKI's national daily, *Harian Rakyat*, was permitted to publish one last issue containing an editorial expressing support for the Movement's actions. That editorial turned out to be the sole piece of documentary evidence available to the army to implicate the PKI in the alleged coup attempt of 1 October. As such, the matter of its authenticity and authorship are crucially important. On both fronts, troubling questions remain.⁸¹ Why, for example, would the official organ of the Communist Party decide to publish an editorial supporting a purported coup attempt that had already failed? Why, moreover, would the PKI's paper have been permitted to publish one last self-incriminating edition on a day when all other national media outlets in Jakarta were in army hands or had been closed down? That is all the more suspicious considering that on the morning of 1 October the editors of other newspapers were explicitly advised by the army not to publish anything about the Movement. One of those was the Islamic newspaper, *Suara Islam*, whose editors later revealed that at 11:00 a.m. on the day of the alleged coup, two army officers (one a Lt. Colonel) had come to their offices to tell them not to publish the story they had already written and sent to the printer. As one of the editors explained in 1967, "So we pulled the story back from the printing plant and did not publish it. But as you can see we came very close to doing so."⁸² Why did no obliging army officer drop by the *Harian Rakyat* office that day to tell *them* not to publish? At a minimum, the available evidence suggests that the army leadership deliberately lured the editors at *Harian Rakyat* into publishing an editorial on the Movement while explicitly

warning others not to do so. Another possibility is that the incriminating editorial was not written by the PKI leadership at all, but by someone with an interest in creating documentary evidence of the PKI's guilt, and with it a pretext for an aggressive campaign to destroy the party once and for all. As Anderson and McVey have noted, "The CIA report [on the alleged coup of October 1965] suggests that [the *Harian Rakyat* editorial] must have been composed beforehand. Perhaps it was, but not necessarily by the Party leadership."⁸³

In its effort to destroy the PKI and the left, the army also adopted a psychological warfare strategy that almost certainly accentuated tensions and increased the likelihood of violence, including killing. In parts of the country thought to be sympathetic to the PKI and its affiliates, the army deployed psychological warfare teams, known in some areas as "Tim Penerangan Operasi Mental" (Operation Mental Information Teams) and in others as "Tim Komando Operasi Mental" (Operation Mental Command Teams) or "Tim Indoktrinasi" (Indoctrination Teams).⁸⁴ In Bali, these teams went from village to village spreading the deadly message of non-neutrality: one could either be against the PKI or for it, but there was no middle ground. As one newspaper described the army's message: "It was stressed that there are only two possible alternatives; to be on the side of the G-30-S or to stand behind the government in crushing the G-30-S. There is no such thing as a neutral position."⁸⁵

Army officers stressed that mere declarations of loyalty were not enough. At an official ceremony just days before the mass killings began in Bali, the district military commander in Kerambitan told his audience that the army needed "concrete proof of ex-PKI members' loyalty to the Republic of Indonesia and to Pancasila, because making a written statement is very easy; what matters most is real proof."⁸⁶ Likewise, in a series of mass rallies across Aceh in October, the regional military commander, Brigadier General Ishak Djuarsa, exhorted the population to kill PKI members or risk punishment. As one eyewitness from Takengon recalled, Djuarsa told a crowd: "I will destroy them to their roots! If in the [village] you find members of the PKI, but do not kill them, it will be you who we punish!"⁸⁷ That kind of language, coupled with a natural impulse for self-preservation, compelled not only the genuinely neutral but even former PKI members to join in the attack on the PKI.

In all likelihood, these psy-war operations were conducted under the auspices of the powerful Kopkamtib (Komando Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban—Operations Command to Restore Security and Order) that had been established on 10 October 1965, and was under Suharto's direct command. From the outset, Suharto had interpreted Kopkamtib's mandate broadly to encompass both military and political domains; and in early December, a presidential decree specified that it had the power to "restore the authority of the Government by means of *physical-military and mental operations*" [emphasis added].⁸⁸ Likewise, an army order outlining the strategy for crushing the PKI explicitly mentioned the use of psychological warfare: "The G30S/PKI should be given no opportunity to consolidate. It should be pushed back systematically by all means, including psy-war"⁸⁹

Beyond its barely concealed threat of and incitement to violence, what is most striking about this language is how much it sounds like the rhetoric of a country at war. Through that war-like rhetoric, the entire political field was reduced to a battle between good and evil, between loyalists and traitors, between the nation and its enemies. Here, we can perhaps see the rhetorical imprint of Sukarno's Old Order and the Cold War. But that is not the whole story. What made this different, in both degree and kind, was that the

language of war was now being articulated by the army—that is, by the institution that had a near monopoly on the means of force, and was trained in the use of violence—and was being directed at hundreds of thousands of unarmed civilians. That was an altogether different matter than a rag-tag group of students angrily denouncing their political enemies while waving hand-drawn placards. When an army declares war, especially against its own civilian population, the stakes are much higher—and the results are inevitably more catastrophic.

Reflections

Far from being a spontaneous popular reaction to the treachery of the PKI, as the New Order regime and its successors have always insisted, the mass killings of 1965–66 were set in motion by the army itself. It was the army leadership, under Major General Suharto, who introduced the idea that the political crisis of October should and could be resolved through resort to violence, and provided the means through which that intention was achieved. It was the army whose territorial and elite para-commando units took the lead in conducting “cleansing” campaigns in which members of the PKI and its affiliates were detained, beaten and killed. It was the army that provided the essential logistical materiel and organizational backbone for those operations. It was the army that mobilized, trained and armed tens (and perhaps hundreds) of thousands of young men to serve in the militia groups and death squads that detained and killed communists across the country. It was the army that led the campaign of vilification that portrayed the PKI and its members as atheists, traitors, devils, barbarians, whores and terrorists, thereby providing both motive and justification for the killing of many thousands of civilians who had committed no crime. It was the army that made sophisticated and unscrupulous use of the mass media to achieve these ends and, in all likelihood, to create false documentary evidence of the PKI’s guilt. And it was the army that deployed the language of war, deliberately creating an atmosphere in which there was only friend and foe, but in which violence was to be used only by those with weapons, against those with none.

The army had allies in this effort, of course, none more enthusiastic than the anti-communist religious and political leaders who fanned the flames of hatred and violence by allusions to long-standing religious and cultural differences. The violence was also fuelled by the wider international context of the Cold War and by the acts and omissions of key foreign powers. But without the army’s orchestrated campaign to cast the PKI as evil, without the conscious decision to effect its physical annihilation, and without the mobilization of the army’s considerable organizational and logistical capacity to carry out that decision, it is unlikely that any of those long-standing tensions or external forces would ever have given rise to violence of such staggering breadth and brutality.

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Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on Contributor

Geoffrey Robinson is Professor of History at UCLA where he teaches and writes about political violence, genocide, popular resistance and human rights, primarily in Southeast Asia. Before coming to UCLA, he worked for six years at Amnesty International's Research Department in London. His major works include: *The Dark Side of Paradise: Political Violence in Bali* (Cornell University Press, 1995); *East Timor 1999: Crimes against Humanity* (Elsham & Hak, 2006); and "If You Leave Us Here, We Will Die": *How Genocide Was Stopped in East Timor* (Princeton University Press, 2010). He has recently completed a new book, *The Killing Season: A History of the Indonesian Massacres, 1965-66*, to be published by Princeton University Press in early 2018.

Notes

1. Those contributions are too numerous to list here, but they include several excellent local and regional studies, and a variety of more general and thematic accounts. For a good sampling of the recent scholarship, see Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor, eds., *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia, 1965-68* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012), and the other articles in this special issue.
2. It is a revised and shortened version of a chapter from *The Killing Season: A History of the Indonesian Massacres, 1965-66*, forthcoming with Princeton University Press in early 2018.
3. That case has recently been made for Aceh by Jess Melvin on the basis of newly discovered Indonesian army documents. See Jess Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide: Mechanics of Mass Murder* (Abingdon: Routledge, forthcoming). Quotations are taken from Jess Melvin, "Mechanics of Mass Murder: How the Indonesian Military Initiated and Implemented the Indonesian Genocide—the Case of Aceh" (PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 2014). I have elsewhere made the argument for Bali in Geoffrey Robinson, *The Dark Side of Paradise: Political Violence in Bali* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995). Other scholars, notably Douglas Kammen, John Roosa and Robert Cribb, have likewise stressed that earlier studies overstated the importance of local social and cultural conditions, while underplaying the role of the army in fomenting and organizing the violence. See Kammen and McGregor, *The Contours of Mass Violence*, 1-24; John Roosa, "The State of Knowledge about an Open Secret: Indonesia's Mass Disappearances of 1965-66," *Journal of Asian Studies* 75, no. 2 (2016): 281-97; and Robert Cribb, "Political Genocides in Postcolonial Asia," in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, ed. Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 445-65.
4. See Benjamin Valentino, *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); Scott Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations: War, Leadership, and Genocide in Modern Africa* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015); and Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).
5. For a related argument, see Douglas Kammen and Faizah Zakaria, "Detention in Mass Violence: Policy and Practice in Indonesia, 1965-1968," *Critical Asian Studies* 44, no. 3 (2012): 441-66. In explaining temporal and spatial variations in the violence, Kammen and Zakaria also consider the nature of political party competition, a factor not explored here.
6. For a compelling presentation of that case, see Melvin, "Mechanics of Mass Murder."
7. British Embassy Jakarta (Murray) to South East Asia Department, Foreign Office (Cable), 10 February 1966, Records of the Foreign Office, DH 1015, FO 371/186028, UK National Archives (hereafter, UKNA).

8. The estimate was reported by US officials in Embtel 1098, US Embassy Jakarta to Department of State, 20 October 1965, Record Group (hereafter, RG) 59, POL 18 INDON, National Archives & Records Administration (hereafter, NARA).
9. Cited in Yen-ling Tsai and Douglas Kammen, "Anti-Communist Violence and the Ethnic Chinese in Medan, North Sumatra," in Kammen and McGregor, *The Contours of Mass Violence*, 141. Kammen and Tsai date the onset of the mass killings in North Sumatra to 2 November 1965.
10. Robinson, *Dark Side of Paradise*, 286, 290–92.
11. Troop strength was limited in East Java because eight of the province's sixteen organic battalions were serving elsewhere at the time. David Jenkins and Douglas Kammen, "The Army Para-Commando Regiment and the Reign of Terror in Central Java and Bali," in Kammen and McGregor, *The Contours of Mass Violence*, 75–103.
12. On the killings in Flores and West Timor, see Gerry van Klinken, *The Making of Middle Indonesia: Middle Classes in Kupang Town, 1930s–1980s* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); and Steven Farram, "The PKI in West Timor and Nusa Tenggara Timur, 1965 and Beyond," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 166, no. 4 (2010): 381–403.
13. Jenkins and Kammen, "The Army Para-Commando Regiment," 80.
14. Two Central Java-based RPKAD battalions apparently remained in the province after the Jakarta-based battalion departed. For details, see Jenkins and Kammen, "The Army Para-Commando Regiment," 96.
15. In my earlier work, I argued that the mass killing in Bali began only after the arrival of RPKAD forces in early December 1965. Jenkins and Kammen have since presented evidence that some killings occurred in Bali in the days just before those forces landed. See Jenkins and Kammen, "The Army Para-Commando Regiment." There is no dispute, however, that the killings accelerated very dramatically after the deployment of these outside forces.
16. See Robinson, *Dark Side of Paradise*, 295–7; and Jenkins and Kammen, "The Army Para-Commando Regiment," 101.
17. Embtel 1360, US Embassy Jakarta to Department of State, 6 November 1965, RG 59, POL 23–9 INDON, NARA.
18. The document read: "Within the framework of the cleansing/extermination of the Gerakan 30 September (G30S), the membership of Hansip/Hanra in Sector IV North Aceh was given weapons by the Kosehkan North Aceh for this purpose." Cited in Melvin, "Mechanics of Mass Murder," 187.
19. Robinson, *Dark Side of Paradise*, 297–8.
20. Cited in *ibid.*, 298.
21. Windle memorandum, in British Embassy Jakarta (Cambridge) to South East Asia Department, Foreign Office (Tonkin), 16 December 1965, DH 1015/335a, FO 371/180325, UKNA.
22. Rohim, cited in Agus Sunyoto, Miftahul Ulum, H. Abu Muslih and Imam Kusnin Ahmad, *Banser Berjihad Menumpas PKI* (Tulungagung: Lembaga Kajian dan Pengembangan Pimpinan Wilayah Gerakan Pemuda Ansor Jawa Timur & Pesulukan Thoriqoh Agung [PETA] Tulungagung, 1996), 156. Banser was an NU-affiliated militia group.
23. Cited in Melvin, "Mechanics of Mass Murder," 142.
24. That was the case in Flores, for example. See van Klinken, *The Making of Middle Indonesia*, 239–40.
25. Presiden Republik Indonesia, *Instruksi Presiden/Pangti ABRI/KOTI No. 22/KOTI/1965*, 15 November 1965. That decree was, in turn, based on instructions issued by General Nasution on 12 November 1965, and by General Suharto on 10 October 1965, which outlined procedures for "cleansing" G30S elements from the army. Kammen and Zakaria, "Detention in Mass Violence," 443.
26. NU (Nahdlatul Ulama—Council of Islamic Scholars); PNI (Partai Nasional Indonesia—Indonesian Nationalist Party); IPKI (Ikatan Pendukung Kemerdekaan Indonesia—League of Upholders of Indonesian Freedom); and Partai Katolik (Catholic Party).
27. KAP-Gestapu was reportedly formed on the suggestion of Brigadier General Sutjipto, the head of the political section of KOTI (Komando Operasi Tertinggi—Supreme Operations Command),

- and its mass rallies were encouraged by Kostrad officers. Harold Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 141.
28. In a secret cable from early December 1965, US Ambassador Green spelled out the plan to channel secret cash to the group: "This is to confirm my earlier concurrence that we provide Malik with fifty million rupiahs requested by him for the activities of the KAP-Gestapu movement." Embtel 1628, US Embassy Jakarta to Department of State, 2 December 1965, US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. 26, Indonesia; Malaysia-Singapore; Philippines* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2001), 379–80.
 29. Embtel 1435, US Embassy Jakarta to Department of State, 13 November 1965, POL 23–9 INDON, NARA. Cited in Jenkins and Kammen, "The Army Para-Commando Regiment," 91–2n61.
 30. Melvin, "Mechanics of Mass Murder," 161, 186.
 31. To those unfamiliar with the wider history, for example, Joshua Oppenheimer's first film about 1965–66, *The Act of Killing*, might leave the impression that the perpetrators were nothing more than local gangsters whose actions were unconnected to a wider army campaign. Oppenheimer's second film on the subject, *The Look of Silence*, corrects that impression, making clear that the army delivered truckloads of detainees, blindfolded and hands tied, to local toughs who then killed them and dumped their bodies into the Snake River near Medan.
 32. See, for example, Hermawan Sulisty, "The Forgotten Years: The Missing History of Indonesia's Mass Slaughter" (PhD thesis, Arizona State University, 1997) and Christian Gerlach, *Extremely Violent Societies: Mass Violence in the Twentieth-Century World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). While accepting that the army may have played a significant role in some areas, such authors point to the variations as evidence that in other areas horizontal social and cultural conflicts were the primary drivers of violence. For a recent critique of that view, see Roosa, "The State of Knowledge."
 33. Embtel 1326, US Embassy Jakarta to Department of State, 4 November 1965, Indonesia, Vol. V, Country File, National Security Files (NSF), Box 247, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library (LBJ Library).
 34. Cited in Jenkins and Kammen, "The Army Para-Commando Regiment," 88.
 35. Dinas Sejarah TNI AD, "Crushing the G30S/PKI in Central Java," in *The Indonesian Killings, 1965–1966: Studies from Java and Bali*, ed. Robert Cribb (Clayton, Vic.: Monash Papers on Southeast Asia, no. 21, 1990), 166.
 36. According to a history of Banser's campaign against the PKI in East Java, for example: "The army facilitated and supported the extermination of the PKI." Sunyoto et al., *Banser Berjihad*, 153; see also 89–136 and 153–60.
 37. Sunyoto et al., *Banser Berjihad*, 124 and, for additional examples, 101, 153, 157. It should be noted that these testimonies appear to contradict evidence presented by Jenkins and Kammen, "The Army Para-Commando Regiment" that the RPKAD did not operate in East Java until June 1966.
 38. Sunyoto et al., *Banser Berjihad*, 124.
 39. *Ibid.*, 159.
 40. Kenneth R. Young, "Local and National Influences in the Violence of 1965," in Cribb, *The Indonesian Killings*, 93.
 41. Cited in Tsai and Kammen, "Anti-Communist Violence," 141n40.
 42. Oppenheimer, *Look of Silence* (0:59).
 43. John Hughes, *Indonesian Upheaval* (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1967), 181.
 44. *Ibid.*, 180.
 45. Most of this evidence is presented in Melvin, "Mechanics of Mass Murder," especially chapters 3, 4 and 5.
 46. Melvin, "Mechanics of Mass Murder," 104, 133.
 47. John Bowen, *Sumatran Politics and Poetics: Gayo History, 1900–1989* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 119–20.
 48. The same pattern has been reported for West Timor. See van Klinken, *The Making of Middle Indonesia*, 235.

49. That case is made for Bali in Robinson, *Dark Side of Paradise*. For Aceh, see Melvin, "Mechanics of Mass Murder."
50. Michael van Langenberg, "Gestapu and State Power in Indonesia," in Cribb, *The Indonesian Killings*, 47; John Roosa, "The September 30th Movement: The Aporias of the Official Narratives," in Kammen and McGregor, *The Contours of Mass Violence*, 29.
51. Jenkins and Kammen, "The Army Para-Commando Regiment," 91.
52. The text of Suharto's 1 October radio address is printed in Boerhan and Soebekti, *Gerakan 30 September*, Tjetakan ke-II (Jakarta: Lembaga Pendidikan Ilmu Pengetahuan dan Kebudayaan Kosgoro, 1966), 77–9.
53. Cited in Melvin, "Mechanics of Mass Murder," 87.
54. Cited in *ibid.*, 98.
55. Original text in *Berita Yudha*, 5 October 1965. Reprinted in *Indonesia*, no. 1 (1966): 203–4.
56. Suharto's remarks at Lubang Buaya on 4 October 1965 are printed in Boerhan and Soebekti, *Gerakan 30 September*, 87–8.
57. Pengurus Besar Partai NU, Jakarta, 5 October 1965, cited in Sunyoto et al., *Banser Berjihad*, 104–6.
58. *Suara Indonesia* (Denpasar), 11 November 1965. Similar language was used in Kupang, West Timor. See van Klinken, *The Making of Middle Indonesia*, 234.
59. Nasution's remarks appeared in *Berita Yudha*, 12 November 1965. Translated and reproduced in *Indonesia*, no. 1 (1966): 182–3.
60. British Embassy Jakarta (Cambridge) to South East Asia Department Foreign Office (Tonkin), 23 December 1965, DH 1015/349, FO 371/180325, UKNA.
61. The term first appeared in print in one of the army-controlled newspapers. "Inilah Tjerita Kebinatangan 'Gestapu,'" *Angkatan Bersendjata*, 8 October 1965. By most accounts, it was the brainchild of Brigadier General Sugandhi, the director of *Angkatan Bersendjata*. Van Langenberg, "Gestapu and State Power," 46.
62. CIA to White House Situation Room, "The Indonesian Situation," Report no. 21, 7 October 1965, *Indonesia*, Vol. V, Country File, NSF, Box 247, LBJ Library.
63. On the origins and political meaning of the term "Gestok," see Kammen and McGregor, *The Contours of Mass Violence*, 3–4.
64. Helen Fein, "Genocide: A Sociological Perspective," *Current Sociology* 38 (1990): 1–12.
65. Nasution's speech was broadcast on 5 October 1965, and reported by *Berita Yudha* on 6 October. The speech is printed in Boerhan and Soebekti, *Gerakan 30 September*, 87–8. An audio recording of the speech, together with images from the occasion, is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K5HgT4ThQ5E>.
66. *Angkatan Bersendjata*, 8 October 1965.
67. *Angkatan Bersendjata*, 14 October 1965.
68. Tsai and Kammen, "Anti-Communist Violence," 143.
69. The first sensational version of the Gerwani story appeared in *Berita Yudha* on 11 October 1965. The story also appeared in publications of the official Army Information Bureau. See Pusat Penerangan Angkatan Darat Republik Indonesia, *Fakta2 Persoalan Sekitar Gerakan 30 September* (Jakarta: Penerbitan Khusus Nos. 1, 2 and 3, October–December 1965).
70. Saskia Wieringa, *Sexual Politics in Indonesia* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).
71. "Pengakuan Seorang Ketua Gerwani. Diperintahkan Mendjual Diri Kepada Anggota ABRI," *Suara Indonesia* (Denpasar), 5 November 1965.
72. In December 1965, Sukarno cited the official autopsies to prove his case, but nobody paid attention. See Benedict Anderson and Ruth McVey, *A Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965 'Coup' in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1971), 49n8. See also Benedict Anderson, "How Did the Generals Die?" *Indonesia*, no. 43 (1987): 109–34.
73. Robinson, *Dark Side of Paradise*, 293.
74. Jenkins and Kammen, "The Army Para-Commando Regiment," 88.
75. Melvin, "Mechanics of Mass Murder," 139.

76. Sunyoto et al. mention two such cases in East Java; in both cases, Ansor or Banser units reportedly used the holes as mass graves for the PKI members they killed. Sunyoto et al., *Banser Berjihad*, 119, 157.
77. Van Langenberg, "Gestapu and State Power," 48–9.
78. The accounts of survivors and perpetrators from this period commonly mention radio broadcasts as a crucial source of information.
79. Cited in Roosa, "The September 30th Movement," 29.
80. British Embassy Jakarta (Gilchrist) to Foreign Office (Stewart), "Attempted Coup in Indonesia," 19 October 1965, DH 1015/215, FO 371/180320, UKNA.
81. The first serious scholarly discussion of the questions raised by the *Harian Rakyat* editorial is in Anderson and McVey, *A Preliminary Analysis*, 183–209.
82. George Kahin interview with five top Muslim leaders, Jakarta, 18 June 1967.
83. Benedict Anderson and Ruth McVey, "What Happened in Indonesia?" *New York Review of Books*, 1 June 1978.
84. For the operation of these teams in Bali, see Robinson, *Dark Side of Paradise*, 293–4; for Aceh, see Melvin, "Mechanics of Mass Murder," 155, 180.
85. "Orpol/Ormas PKI Bujar, Kekridan, Patjung dan Senganan Lempar Badju," *Suara Indonesia* (Denpasar), 18 November 1965.
86. "Kerambitan Bersih Dari PKI," *Suara Indonesia* (Denpasar), 1 December 1965.
87. Cited in Melvin, "Mechanics of Mass Murder," 116.
88. *Keputusan Presiden/Panglima Tertinggi Angkatan Bersendjata Republik Indonesia/Panglima Besar Komando Operasi Tertinggi (KOTI)*, No. 179/KOTI/1965, 6 December 1965, cited in van Langenberg, "Gestapu and State Power," 51.
89. Dinas Sejarah TNI AD, "Crushing the G30S/PKI in Central Java," 164.