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Indonesia's Original Sin: Mass Killings and Capitalist Expansion, 1965-66*

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ABSTRACT *Following an aborted coup attempt in October 1965, the Indonesian military organized what turned out to be one of the most horrifying massacres of the twentieth century. More than half a million people were killed while hundreds of thousands of others were detained for years in prison camps throughout the country. There are two major points that this paper attempts to make. First, that the killings are in fact a case of state violence despite of the efforts to make it look like spontaneous violence. Second, that the killings are crucial to the expansion of capitalism in Indonesia. Using Marx's concept of 'primitive accumulation', it attempts to show that the mass killings and arrests, the expropriation of people from their houses and lands, and the elimination of working-class political formations, are integral parts of an economic strategy of the New Order.*

This primitive accumulation plays in Political Economy about the same part as original sin in theology. (Karl Marx, 1867)

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Introduction

In the history books of the Suharto regime, the killings of half a million members and sympathizers of the Communist Party of Indonesia and other leftist organizations in 1965-66 were non-events. The only significant killing that occurred at that time was supposedly the killing of six army generals and a lieutenant in Lubang Buaya, a small village on the outskirts of Jakarta, on 1 October 1965. The regime commemorated the killing every year with a national day of remembrance and a ceremony called 'Sacredness of Pancasila Day' (*Hari Kesaktian Pancasila*). With textbooks, films, and field trips to the Museum of the Extreme Left at the site where the killings of the army generals took place, the regime tried to make school children feel repulsed and horrified by this violence, and to feel thankful that Suharto had taken power to save the country from any further treasonous and treacherous acts. If many Indonesians were killed at that time, then it was a matter far removed from Suharto's rise to power. It was only a matter of old feuds among civilians surfacing at a time of anarchy. The regime's most comprehensive propaganda book, authored by the army historian Nugroho Notosusanto and the prosecutor Ismail Saleh (Notosusanto and Saleh 1989), devoted all of two paragraphs to the mass killing, or 'clash' in their terminology, and concluded that 'the blood-bath among members of the society was directly related to events in the past'. The authors suggested that civilians who had been previously maligned or harmed by the PKI took their revenge in 1965-66. The military itself had no relation to the killings.

Surprisingly enough, many scholars with no particular stake in supporting the regime have endorsed its claim that the killing was due to longstanding conflicts among civilians. Iwan Gardono Sujatmiko (1992), probably the first Indonesian to write a dissertation about the killing, fatalistically concluded that the mass killing was inevitable since the PKI was on the 'losing and wrong' side; it was a party that had become the enemy of the people. Clifford Geertz, an anthropologist noted for his subtle herme-

neutics, similarly argued in his memoir that the killings were not the result of state violence (Geertz 1995). The fall of Suharto in 1998 and the subsequent flood of new history books has not led to a serious weakening of this explanation of the killings. Hermawan Sulisty, in his recently published book on the killings in East Java, reverts to the Suharto regime line: they were a 'logical consequence' of a bitter, pre-existing conflict between the communist party and its political rivals (Sulisty 2000).

In the first section of this essay I argue that the killings represented a case of vertical, bureaucratic violence. I must admit there is nothing intellectually challenging in asserting this: the evidence is fairly clear and some scholars have already made the argument (Southwood and Flanagan 1983, Fein 1993, Robinson 1995). I feel compelled, however, to outline briefly the case since so many prominent Indonesian scholars, even those associated with the anti-Suharto 'reformasi', absurdly persist in explaining the killings as horizontal, spontaneous violence and in believing that Indonesians are a volatile, primitive people prone to violence. The first section of this essay is thus an unwanted necessity. Perhaps the novelty that the first section contains, apart from the quoting of oral interviews with former PKI members, is some analysis of the killings as a case of bureaucratic violence *made to look like spontaneous violence*.¹

The argument that I would like to focus upon is the one I make in the second section. It concerns the killings as the foundation for the growth of capitalism in Indonesia. Certainly Indonesia is not a unique case in the world. There were many *coups d'état* accompanied by bloodshed in the South (Latin America, Africa, and Asia) between 1960 and 1975. Chomsky and Herman (1979) have noted that many military officers or cliques of officers

¹ In this connection, one topic that merits further research is Suharto's self-fashioning as a meticulous follower of legal procedure. He never terrorised people by boasting of how many people he killed. Instead, the efficacy of his image worked the opposite way: much of the public knew he had killed many people (it was an open secret) and felt terror in seeing the 'smiling general' behave as if he had not (Ayu Ratih 1997).

who seized power in coups subsequently implemented pro-US economic policies and committed gross human rights violations. These coups resulted in new phases of capital accumulation in the affected countries. The case of the economic transformation of Chile after General Pinochet's coup of 1973 is well known.

For the case of Indonesia, I would like to shift the narration of the mass killings from one of primitive people to primitive accumulation. The mass killings and arrests, the expropriation of people from their houses and lands, and the elimination of working-class political formations, were integral parts of an economic strategy of the clique of army officers who were seizing state power. With the repression of workers at mining and plantation enterprises, the connection between the political repression and the economic strategy is perfectly clear. But the connection holds true for other more indirect cases as well. In general, Suharto and his allied army officers orchestrated the repression and pushed aside President Sukarno with an economic strategy already in mind. They usurped power with a pre-existing plan to promote capitalist growth and tie the Indonesian economy to the West, and thereby end Sukarno's anti-imperialist programme. They planned on receiving foreign aid, loans, and investment from Western countries and to gain access to Western markets for Indonesian exports.² The army-directed mass violence resulted in the separation of a large number of people from their means of production and subsistence.

The military state that resulted from this generalized terror campaign devoted itself over the following years to promoting the interests of domestic and foreign capital. It expropriated people for development projects and maintained a docile populace, thus repeating the same sort of violence that it committed in its early years. The army certainly did not simply serve as a kind of loyal attack dog for foreign and domestic capital - it dominated

² This point became clear when reading documents of the US embassy in Jakarta from 1965 to 1966. See *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, vol. 26, Indonesia: Malaysia-Singapore; Philippines* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 2001).

the state and most definitely had its own institutional interests. However, since Suharto's military state was entirely dependent upon foreign aid and loans (until it finally overdosed in the late 1990s) and upon economic growth for its domestic legitimacy, it had to find ways of harmonizing its own interests with those of capital.

It is widely understood in the literature on the political economy of Indonesia that the mid-1960s represents a dramatic historical break, that the economy under the New Order was radically different from the pre-1965 economy. A noted scholar on Indonesian contemporary politics, Richard Robison, for instance, noted that the expansion of capitalism after the mid-1960s was possible 'only after the political victory of the military over the PKI and the Sukarno regime, which in turn secured a victory at the social level for the propertied classes over the threat posed by the landless and the urban workers' (Robison 1986: 109). Yet the focus in Robison's studies, as in so many others, is on the capitalist development itself, not on those pre-conditions for the development, and pays little attention to how the army's continuing use of violence helped to create those landless workers. I do not view capitalism as solely a matter of the bourgeoisie, as Robison's studies of Indonesia's 'business class' imply. Nor do I view the working class as only those people who are today working in a factory for a wage. Rather, following Marx himself, I see capital as a social relation which involves the formation of a working class and its reproduction year-in year-out as a populace willing to work under the command of those who control the capital.

The army's masks and myths

It has become a kind of cheap thrill in the post-Suharto era to declare that Suharto was the mastermind of the 30 September Movement (*Gerakan 30 September* or G-30-S), that he engineered a coup attempt precisely so that it could provide him with the pretext for repressing it. I have my doubts about this

theory and, more generally, about this tendency to keep speculating about the existence of a mastermind. No new hard evidence has emerged that would allow us to determine who was actually behind G-30-S, even if the official version is hopelessly unreliable. Several new books, including testimonies from a number of figures directly involved in the movement, have merely become the mirror image of the government version in their groundless assertions concerning the identity of the mastermind (Latief 2000, Subandrio 2001, Sembiring 2004). This preoccupation with conspiracy theories has led many scholars, victims and human rights activists to overlook the specifics of Suharto's creeping coup and the terror campaign that followed the coup attempt.

In the weeks immediately after G-30-S, Suharto and his colleagues in the army were capable of organizing an effective, nationwide terror campaign because they had control over the army and material support from foreign governments, particularly the United States (which provided Suharto with equipment for radio communications). One of Suharto's first steps after receiving the mandate from President Soekarno on 1 October, to 'carry out restoration of security and order', was to replace almost all the top leaders of the army and the military commanders outside Jakarta. He set up an investigation team at every level of military command to arrest and detain military personnel suspected of being involved in G-30-S.³ The first targets were two army battalions and the palace guard troops that had been directly involved in the G-30-S, and then the members of the Navy and the Air Force who were suspected of being Sukarno loyalists. Using his existing power base in the Army Stra-

³ This operation was designed more to bring the troops under the command of Suharto and put the pro-Sukarno officers on the defensive. Many officers and troops were detained for months and even years on the flimsiest of evidence, often just the suspicion that they were not sufficiently supportive of Suharto. This kind of cleaning operation was continuously employed by Suharto in the following period to destroy every form of resistance towards his rule, including the one from the officers who used to be his close allies during 1965–66.

tegic Reserves Command (Kostrad) and his new position as the commander of the Command for Restoration of Security and Order (Kopkamtib n.d.), he established the power of his own clique over the entire armed forces.

Suharto's control over the media considerably determined the political developments. Within a short time his troops took over the national radio station and closed down all newspapers and printing houses, except for two newspapers published by the military.⁴ At Antara, the state news agency, hundreds of journalists were fired and jailed. In mid-October its central office and branches were put under the authority of Suharto himself as the Kopkamtib commander. The army's information centre and officers under Suharto's command became the only official sources of information about the country's condition for several weeks after the G-30-S incident. President Sukarno, who tried to calm the public and demanded that violence against those suspected of being involved in G-30-S be stopped, was silenced. Once the military took control of the mass media, the president's speeches were not broadcast anymore on the radio and were not accurately or fully reported in the newspapers.

Suharto's clique used its control over the media to promote an image of the PKI as a kind of wild beast of larger-than-life proportions. The media circulated stories about sadistic violence committed on the generals in Lubang Buaya - eye gouging, genital mutilation, orgiastic pleasure in inflicting pain.⁵ Suharto's terror campaign was designed not just to make the public hate

⁴ The ban was lifted on 6 October 1965 but the newspapers considered leftist were never published again and, in effect, remained under a ban.

⁵ We now know for certain that these stories were lies (Anderson 1987). We do not know exactly who invented them but we can reasonably assume the authors were army intelligence officers engaged in psychological warfare. There are many indications that there was a psychological warfare operation underway in October. The US ambassador, Marshall Green, suggested on 5 October that there should be a covert operation to 'spread the story of the PKI's guilt, treachery, and brutality' (US embassy to Department of State, 5 October 1965, cited by Brands 1989). The CIA was extensively involved in many other anti-Communist propaganda campaigns in the world (McGehee 1990).

the PKI but also to feel directly threatened by it. The army made near daily announcements about new 'evidence' it uncovered in raiding PKI buildings and homes. In many regions of Indonesia, the army declared that it had discovered a PKI hit list of people to be executed, such as religious leaders and non-communist politicians. All those on the list were encouraged to feel that the PKI was out to murder them. These lists too were probably part of the same intelligence operation since they included fanciful lists of the weapons to be used, such as instruments for gouging out eyes (which in many cases were actually tools for tapping rubber trees), as well as ditches or holes in the earth, like the well in Lubang Buaya, for throwing away the corpses. Newspapers reported sensational discoveries, such as containers filled with firearms upon which had been carved Chinese characters and slogans such as 'Long Live PKI!'

Most of the stories were complete fabrications. Instead of consolidating their forces to seize power, as the army propaganda contended, the leaders and members of PKI and other left-wing mass organizations were usually passive and confused. When attacked by the army and its allied civilian militias, they were not even aware of what had actually taken place in Jakarta on 1 October. Rusyana, one of the high-ranking leaders of the party in West Java, heard about the kidnapping of the generals and the G-30-S movement from a radio broadcast:

Then I went out of the house. It so happened that some CC [Central Committee of the PKI]

officials were visiting the locals. So I contacted [him]. ... I asked, 'What is going on?' 'Well, for the time being we have to evade [this situation] ... in case something happens.' Yeah, it's better if we contact the people whom we can possibly help, right? It so happened that there was a nice *khotib* (Islamic preacher) [laughing]. Yeah, some of them [Muslim preachers] supported it [the PKI]. ... in the Pandeglang area they [pro-G-30-S army officers] gathered the political parties to declare their support for the Council of Revolution, led by Lieut. Col. Pratomo, who headed the Kodim [District Military Command] in Pandeglang. Yeah, it was after only 12 hours, in the evening Suharto

made a speech about G-30-S being counter revolutionary. Well, then, it collapsed all of a sudden. It went in reverse, didn't it? [...] We heard [about it] at nine, oh my God it was a real bungle. So, I didn't come home [laughing].

Regular members and supporters of leftist organizations were even more uncertain. A former member of a communist youth organization recalls,

We were confused. The leaders of the organization didn't know what to do. There was a curfew, so I didn't stay at home. I slept in the backyard along with other friends. We didn't know anything. After a few nights we went our different ways, trying to save ourselves. Some returned to their villages, some stayed. There was no instructions or briefings from the organization. I don't know, and then... it was a mess. In November I lost contact with my friends. In fact it was in prison where I met many friends. It was there where I actually learned what was going on [laughing].

Whatever the real intentions of the party leaders at that time, it was clear that none of the cadres or members of leftist organizations were prepared for an open confrontation with the military. Gunawan, an artist belonging to the progressive cultural organization, Lekra, then setting up the decorations for the Asian Games in Jakarta, recalled,

In the morning, I woke up, that was October 1st. [My] friends woke up, listened to the radio, [to] that announcement. What happened? They all crowded [around the radio], right. Everybody was, yeah, how could it be this way? But, we didn't feel that we were involved in anything. I didn't even know about the incident. If we didn't know and weren't involved, nothing would happen to us, right? So we were quite calm, we didn't go anywhere. It was only later, day by day, we wondered how did it become like this? Why were the Gerwani [women organization] office, CC-PKI office, BTI [peasant union] office destroyed? Aidit's house [Chairman of PKI]. Whoa, the problem spread. Well then, once Lekra office was occupied, the books ransacked, my, my, this couldn't get any worse. We realized that we could also become targets.

The movement in Jakarta had virtually no support outside the city except from several groups in Central Java led by middle-

rank military officers. In Jogjakarta, some students and members of the youth organization took to the streets in support of the movement. A former student activist involved in the demonstration said,

We knew nothing about the killings of generals in Jakarta. Friends from CGMI [a leftist student organization] briefed us about a coup attempt by 'rightwing generals' in Jakarta that was forestalled by Untung. So we went out for a demonstration on October 2, 1965 to support the Revolutionary Council. At the KOREM [military headquarters] Major Kartawi gave a speech. He was a KOREM officer in charge of military operations. So, I didn't know what the G-30-S was about, I knew nothing. We truly believed that the rightwing Council of Generals was real. We had no chance to discuss these things thoroughly. Only later, in prison, we tried to reconstruct what actually happened by asking friends who seem to know more about the role of the Special Bureau [of the PKI], Aidit [the party's chairman], and whether the *Politbiro* knew anything about it. So, in prison we learned more about what happened. We didn't know that some generals were killed in Jakarta and we never dug any holes [in which to dump corpses]. There was no plan to kill reactionary leaders or landlords. There was nothing like that.

It is often noted that every large-scale killing is preceded by a dehumanization of the victims. This is a global pattern. The communists of Indonesia were dehumanized so that the public would not see the communists as fellow citizens but only as demons bent on spreading atheism and sadism. Those civilians who approved of the killings of the communists often argue today that it was a time when 'you either kill or be killed', as if the PKI members were dangerous killers ready and determined to kill all their enemies. But what needs to be recognized is that this atmosphere was intentionally manufactured by the army. After all, if it were really a conflict between two sides, one would expect the PKI to have committed its share of the violence. Despite all the media hype at the time and the subsequent thirty-plus years of state-sponsored anti-Communist propaganda, there is little evidence of any large-scale killings by the PKI either immediately before or after 1965.⁶ The so-called

'social conflict' actually consisted of unilateral attacks. Members of the party and other leftist organizations offered virtually no resistance to attacks on their offices and homes. In many places the military rounded up alleged communists with ease and carried out mass executions.

Following another aspect of this global pattern, which we have seen elsewhere - such as in Rwanda - the Indonesian army organized paramilitary, civilian groups to participate in the terror campaign. In the first week of October, anti-Communist mass organizations were created out of existing organizations and individuals who had longstanding ties to the army. The army mobilized non-communist youth groups all over Indonesia to carry out the violence against people associated with the PKI. Three days after the kidnapping and killing of the generals the 'Action Unity for the Destruction of the September 30 Movement' (KAPGestapu) was formed by civilians who enjoyed the support of the army (Nasution 1985: 272-74). Civilian public figures, especially from Muslim organizations such as Ansor, a youth wing of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), were staged to minimize the impression of a direct confrontation between PKI and the Army.⁷ The US embassy in Jakarta reported back to the State Department in a cable of 4 November 1965:

In Central Java, Army (RPKAD) is training Moslem Youth [probably ei-

⁶ In 1968, NU wrote a report about 60 cases of murder and assault against its members and sympathizers (Feillard 1999: 76-77). In the same year, a number of PKI leaders and members organized an armed resistance that appeared more as an attempt to save themselves rather than a movement to seize power (Liem 2004). It is possible that the 60 cases mentioned above were part of the activities of this group. Nevertheless, it has to be remembered that, at the same time, the Army was conducting a 'second cleaning operation' against its allies who were demanding compensation for their 'services'.

⁷ In Central and East Java, Nahdlatul Ulama was directly involved in the mass murder. In Bali, a similar role was played by Tameng Marhaen, an organization under the PNI (Indonesian National Party), while in Flores and Timor it was Catholic Youth. All of these organizations were closely connected to the military in launching their actions. Some of them even congregated in 'laskar' (troops) under direct supervision from the military.

ther Banser or HMI] and supplying them with weapons and will keep them out in front against the PKI. Army will try to avoid as much it can safely do so, direct confrontation with the PKI ... Army is letting groups other than Army discredit them [the PKI] and demand their punishment. (Cited by Robinson 1995)

The involvement of these paramilitary and civilian organizations in the violence has confused some scholars into thinking that the violence represented a conflict between these organizations, such as NU, and the PKI. The chain of their argumentation, however, lacks a crucial link, that between largely non-violent political rivalry and large-scale killing. How did a longstanding political rivalry turn into mass murder? Why was the conflict resolved through a bloodbath? The implicit, sometimes explicit assumption widely shared by academics and state officials alike is an ahistorical essentialism, that Indonesians are a naturally violent and temperamental people who are accustomed to resolving their conflicts through violence. Such an explanation is not only false, but also misleading because it distracts our view from the most important actor in the 1965-66 wave of violence, i.e. the military.

If we actually examine the events of 1965-66, we find that the longstanding political conflict cannot account for the killings. In Bali, the PNI and the PKI had been bitter rivals since the late 1950s. After G-30-S and the anti-PKI hype from the army, the PNI did not by itself go out and kill communists. The PNI militia did launch some attacks on PKI homes and buildings but it appears not to have killed anyone during the months of October and November 1965. It was only in December, once the RPKAD troops arrived, that the mass killing began. The same pattern can be seen in North Sumatra where the military began by provoking non-communist youth groups into attacking PKI supporters by saying that the PKI would kill them all if G-30-S was successful. In Central Java, the notorious special forces actively armed youth groups and developed 'cooperation' to purge PKI because the unit did not have enough troops (Sundhaussen 1982). On many

occasions those who did not join the violence against the PKI were considered PKI supporters themselves and thus became victims themselves.

From discussions that my colleagues and I have had with ex-political prisoners, eyewitnesses, and political figures, we have found that many victims were executed after they had been taken into custody. The victims were taken out from prisons, military buildings, and makeshift detention centres and trucked to remote locations for execution and burial in mass graves. The bureaucratic nature of the killing is indicated by the term used at the time: '*dibon*', which could be translated as 'ticketed'. A '*bon*' is a receipt, indicating in this case that the army had lists of names which they used to call people out of prison. There was some paperwork involved in this mass killing. One survivor in Bali recalled how a list of PKI members was prepared in his village:

Before that, in November 1965, we were taken to the *pura* [village temple] by the village head to take an oath and register. We were told to take an oath condemning the PKI in return for our lives. The oath went like this, 'I condemn PKI's doing and I no longer want to be a member of that party.' The oath was in Balinese. At that time I didn't want to do it. Why should I take an oath? In the past Lekra was allowed to exist by the government. Why should I condemn it now? I didn't even understand what mistake should be condemned. Later I found out that that list was used to look for people to be killed. Now I begin to think, well because we ourselves condemned the party, we admitted that we're wrong, it's only natural that we would be killed, that's how it worked. See, that's indeed my thinking, and I didn't want that to happen. After the killing happened maybe people in the village also knew that the list was going to be used for killing. In fact the list still exists in village offices. In this place alone there were 40 people written on the list including old people. The archive is still with the village head.

Admittedly, it is difficult at this stage to construct a detailed description of the various processes by which people were killed. There is, however, enough information to know that the army played a dominant role in instigating, organizing, and carrying

out the killings. One can see the same pattern of bureaucratic violence masquerading as spontaneous violence in many of the later army operations, most dramatically and unconvincingly in the mobilization of the East Timorese militias during the referendum in 1999.

Primitive people or primitive accumulation?

A framework often used for understanding the extermination campaign of 1965–66 is the discourse of human rights. Using international human rights instruments and laws as parameters, the focus of analysis is the kind of violations committed, the number of violations, and the identity of the perpetrators and the victims. Human rights discourse is no doubt valuable for affirming the dignity of the victims, that they were indeed humans who had rights and were not animals or demons who should have been killed, tortured, and raped. There is, however, a certain blindspot to this discourse since it fails to connect state or military violence to economic struggles over property and wealth. Violations remain understood at the level of state politics, and not in the context of the dynamics of the existing capitalist order. The killing of trade union activists and workers in the plantations of North Sumatra, for example, signifies more than just a violation of human rights. It signifies a defeat for the workers and a reduction of the remaining workers' will and capacity to resist the plantation owners. Conventional human rights research does not include within its scope the profound effects that such an event can have on the hopes, expectations, selforganization, and cultural life of a community of workers.

The discourse of political economy, at least in its present form, on the other hand does not remedy these limitations for it suffers from the same blindspot: it fails to connect economic processes to state violence. There are many studies about the shifting orientation of economic policy, the change of structure and technology in production, and the growth of domestic capital after 1965 (Robison 1986; Booth 1992; Hill 1996), but all appear

to be disconnected from the mass killing which took place at the same time. The market just seems to move like an automaton with a will of its own, following laws of its own, divorced from state violence. One may note that this is a longstanding failure of classical political economy, wherein most theorists took it for granted that workers work for a wage without inquiring into how a labour market is formed in the first place, much less how it is continually composed and recomposed by state violence. Such social facts just seem to exist from time immemorial. Marx criticized their work by arguing that 'in actual history, conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, in sum force' is responsible for the creation of a large propertyless population. As is well known, Marx termed this historical process 'primitive accumulation', a process 'whereby the social means of subsistence and production are turned into capital, and the immediate producers are turned into wage-labourers' (Marx 1867: 874).

I suggest we think of the great upheaval of 1965-66 as one of those epoch-making moments when, to quote Marx, 'great masses of people are suddenly and forcibly torn from their means of subsistence'. I do not wish to suggest that capitalism in Indonesia began in 1965. One should understand primitive accumulation as something which, besides forming the starting point of capitalism, returns again and again, as the basis or basic precondition which is necessary for further phases of capital accumulation.⁸ It recurs particularly in a time of crisis when it becomes an obstacle to the reproduction of the system. The separation of producers from their means of production and subsistence, the most important feature of primitive accumulation, is imposed through 'direct extra-economic force', particularly the state (Marx 1867: 899-900). This can be seen in Java during colonial times when land and natural resources were removed from the control of

⁸ Karl Polanyi developed this thought by highlighting various social processes and strategies that are intended to remove the arrangement protecting the society from the market (Polanyi 1944). That process did not occur only once in history but keeps repeating, along with the dynamics of capital expansion on the one hand and various forms of social resistance on the other.

the rural inhabitants and made to serve the growth of capital in the Netherlands. Taxes, forced cultivation of export crops, and indebtedness helped create an army of landless persons. *Pax Neerlandica*, which was built by the dispatch of troops throughout Nusantara during the second half of the 19th century, did not merely integrate the archipelago into one administrative system, but also forced the colonized into the logic of capital accumulation. The importance of this process for capital formation was marked by the notorious proverb that Java at that time was the 'cork upon which the Netherlands floats'.

Here, I do not want to delve into the question on the origins of capitalism in Indonesia and the creation of a proletariat. I only wish to contend that the extermination of 1965-66 represents one specific, epochal moment in the history of capitalism in Indonesia, a moment that is written in 'letters of blood and fire'. Mass killing, as will be shown below, has considerable influence on the balance of class power, reflected in the increase of inequality at the workplace and the freedom for capital to implement work schemes that disadvantage workers. It was also violence that allowed the New Order rulers to implement economic policies that reversed the anti-imperialist and democratic ideals of an entire generation of nationalists.

Suharto's terror campaign, his 'creeping coup', destroyed the economic livelihood of millions of families. An estimated half million persons were killed and a million and a half persons were indefinitely detained as political prisoners. The families of such prisoners lived with the constant threat of harassment from state officials. It is impossible to determine just how many hectares of land and how many houses were seized by the army and its allies. According to one writer, about half a million hectares of agricultural land that had been redistributed during the land reform programme of the early 1960s were either retaken by the former owners or the local army officers (Utrecht 1970). In some areas, the army's seizures of land and murdering of peasant activists became the basis for the rapid expansion of cash-crop-

ping. The radical peasant organization, the BTI, challenged the pattern of production, which according to them only gave high incomes to the landlords and, in turn, deepened the inequalities in the village.

The destruction of popular organizations meant the ending of grassroots efforts at alternative development. An ex-activist of Pemuda Rakyat (People's Youth), described his activities before he was detained,

As a teacher I also provided guidance to the society to make them progress in all fields. For example, for the elderly people in that era who were illiterate, we taught them reading, writing, etc. We gave direction how to plant crops as well, although they actually had more experience. In my case, my theory was perfected by the practice I did myself. For example at that time, we showed them the technique *telo mukibat*, then the technique *telo pendem* was also successful, for example by eating whatever was available but nutritious. I think at that time what was called *turba* (*turun ke bawah* or going down with the people) really meant to be united with the people, to eat what was called *tiwul* and *sanggreng*.

At the time he was arrested, his knowledge and ability to work collectively for managing subsistence agricultural production were robbed as well. The New Order supplanted these types of people with the programme Bimas/Inmas, which carried the agenda of the Green Revolution and was supported by international financial institutions (Palmer 1977). This programme changed agriculture from that oriented toward fulfilling the peasants' own needs to that oriented toward commodity production. This programme encouraged peasants to leave their traditional patterns and 'rationalize' production by decreasing the use of human labour in the fields. This encouraged more people to leave the villages. Violence was often used to force peasants to get involved in such programmes. In West Java, the army repeatedly visited community leaders and urged the peasants to use the new seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides. Peasants who refused the programme were accused of being members of BTI.

On the one hand, the result of this Green Revolution was indeed

astounding in terms of the increase of agricultural output. On the other hand, inequality and poverty also increased (Hüsken and White 1989, Booth 1992). The use of new technology and production processes required large investments that could only be made by wealthier landlords. Many peasants thus lost their land, which had been their means of subsistence because of this kind of competition. In Java, the number of landless peasants increased by five times in the period of 1973-80 (*Sinar Harapan*, 8 July 1981). One of the government's boasts in the 1980s was that Indonesia was able to be self-sufficient in rice because of that programme, but that success was very short-lived. By the late-1990s Indonesia returned to importing 9% of its rice needs, exactly the same amount as it did in 1965.

Workers were specifically targeted in the violence of 1965-66. The 'cleansing operation' from October 1965 onwards included industries, especially those industries where, according to their intelligence, leftist unions were dominant. As noted by a scholar, the repressive measures were basically a 'political response by a newly consolidating political coalition ... to the possibility of the reemergence of a left-wing dominated, militant labor movement' (Hadiz 1997). The destruction of workers' power was an important part of post-1965 government economic policy. In meetings to formulate steps for improving the economy, government ministers formulated repressive labour policies that had been advocated by foreign investors and lenders (Winters 1996). Obviously, such organized repression was only possible once the workers had been robbed of their unions and their knowledge of resistance.

The arrests and killings dramatically altered the relations of power between capital and labour at the workplace. In the plantations of North Sumatra, it has been estimated that 16% of the workers disappeared; some were killed and some ran away. With the union crushed and the workers anxious of further army attacks, the plantation owners reorganized production by using more casual labourers - a system the plantation workers union had pre-

vented from being implemented in the past. The owners were also able to drive down wages and keep the workers disorganized (Stoler 1985: 164-69). In several industries, businessmen with military support made use of the wave of violence to revive forced labour. A report by the American TV network NBC in 1967 revealed that workers at rubber plantations in Sumatra were prisoners working at gunpoint. An excerpt from the narration to the film footage:

Indonesia has a fabulous potential wealth in natural resources and the New Order wants it exploited. So they are returning the private properties expropriated by Sukarno's regime. Goodyear's Sumatran rubber empire is an example. It was seized [by the rubber workers] in retaliation for US aggression in Vietnam in 1965. The rubber workers union was Communist-run, so after the coup many of them were killed or imprisoned. Some of the survivors, you see them here, still work the rubber - but this time as prisoners, and at gunpoint. (Quoted in Griswold 1975)

The number of unions and the number of workers joining the unions decreased dramatically after 1965. The government closed down all independent unions and formed a single government-controlled union. The destruction of the workers' capacity for resistance was an important outcome of mass murders of 1965-66. When conducting labour education training classes in various cities of Java in the late 1980s, I realized that many workers were very worried that a repeat of the 1965-66 violence could occur. One major obstacle for the growth of labour unions was the fear among the workers themselves; they were unwilling to join to join a union for fear they would be abducted, tortured, or killed.⁹ State violence in this case played a crucial role in creating a cheap and submissive labour force - Indonesia's selling point for attracting foreign capital during the New Order period.

One fact often overlooked is that the army reinvented slave

⁹ Businessmen often used the allegation 'PKI' to hinder the activities of worker activists at the workplace or industrial site. Among the workers themselves there was a bitter joke about willingness 'to be PKI-ed' (treated as PKI) if they join the activities of a workers union.

labour after 1965. The public roads and buildings in many regions of Indonesia were built by political prisoners who were forced to work on such projects without a wage (Razif 2004). A *tapol* in Palu, Central Sulawesi, explained how hundreds of political prisoners in his city were mobilized to construct buildings and houses, including the local military headquarters.¹⁰ In the morning they were packed in a truck and then taken to the construction sites spreading all over the city. Half were taken to abandoned fields to work on the land that was to be turned into plantations. Many of them died, generally because of sickness as a result of hard work with insufficient food. Bloated bellies were an epidemic in the detention centre and medicine was limited. There were also those who had to struggle to find their own food in the fields while listening to the mockery from the guards who reminded them that Sukarno had suggested people cope with the pre-1965 economic shortages by eating rats from the rice fields. The largest slave labour project was Buru Island, where political prisoners, confined to barracks from sundown to sunup, were forced to turn arid grassland into arable fields. After ten years of unpaid labour, the political prisoners managed to turn the island into the most important rice producer and food staple in the Maluku islands.

The survivors of the terror lost their jobs, their houses, their land, their pensions, and their belongings. Many families lost their sole income earner. Even after a political prisoner, a *tapol*, was released from prison, he or she could neither obtain a job in the public sector nor in many private sector firms. The government issued a set of regulations that forbade political prisoners from working in occupations where they could influence public opinion, such as writers, performing artists (e.g. puppet master), and government officials. A child of a *tapol* in central Java recounts the difficulties her father faced after being released

¹⁰ The logic of forced labour was extended to imprisoned artists as well; painters, especially the well-known ones, were forced to produce paintings for free, paintings that their army masters sold on the market.

from prison:

But it's true that the surveillance of my father was a bit too tight. If he was sick for three days and didn't appear [in public], he'd be summoned again. The point is he was not allowed to get out, [he] remained under city detention. Once we planned to open an English course so that father had some activity, but [we] didn't get the permit. The KORAMIL didn't dare to give permission, [we] had to go to KODIM and the Office of Social and Political Affairs they said. Father himself felt uneasy, what could he say? He didn't have any job and was dependent on my mother. I myself regretted the government's attitude at that time for not giving freedom for father to do something. Whatever business he was trying to do was not permitted. So, in the end his activity was only at home, reading, writing, that's it. Because he couldn't do anything else. Maybe that's what sped up his death in 1985. He felt frustrated as a man who had to depend on my mother when he wasn't that old. He was only in his 60s. He was still fresh. While here many were still working, his friends were still working.

Family members of the tapols too were denied eligibility for employment in the government and strategic industries, and if somehow they did manage to get hired they could be summarily fired if their identity was discovered in the course of the screening tests routinely conducted by Kopkamtib and its successor, Bakorstanas (Coordinating Body for National Stability). After the mass release of political prisoners at the end of the 1970s, the New Order issued numerous laws and regulations to discriminate against ex-political prisoners and their families. Local community leaders, factory owners and schools were constantly alerted about the 'latent danger of communism'. The discourse of potential threats of communists, fundamental to the legitimacy of Suharto's regime, shaped industrial relations.¹¹ Potential employ-

¹¹ In 1986–87 when Indonesia went through a crisis, tens of thousands of government officials from various departments were laid off due to 'unclean environment' violations, that is, they were related to a political prisoner. But according to several interviews, this mass dismissal was a pre-planned effort to minimize the number of state workers. The 'unclean environment' justification freed the government from its responsibility to provide compensation for the workers and ensured they would not be confident to resist. A similar strategy was often employed in the private sector towards workers who were involved in political activities.

ees were obliged to show a letter declaring that they were not involved in the G-30-S or related in any way to the PKI or a leftist organization, and have no familial relations with ex-political prisoners. One option to avoid this kind of problem with the government was not to admit that the victims were part of one's family. Jaelam from Tasikmalaya told his story:

[In order] to be able to become a government official [one] had to sever familial ties. My child who worked as a high school teacher died not as my child. That relationship was broken, as if she was not my child. Although in our hearts that was not the case, but administratively, as it was determined by 'law', guaranteed by law, she was forced not to become my daughter. It's better if I'm considered dead, that I'm not considered child's father at all. That was very painful, wasn't it? Then, the second thing, my elder brother worked at Pertamina [state gas and petroleum company]. There was a kind of screening for the sake of 'clean environment'. He said that he didn't have any sibling who was involved in G-30-S. Yet, I was his younger brother. He even cried at our father's lap. [Father said to me] 'Sorry that your brother did this. It was only to save [our] stomachs.' It went to that extent.

To avoid the repression, families of political prisoners and those killed or disappeared tended to avoid problems at work. They were not confident to engage in struggles to improve their livelihood at the workplace. The fact that they were able to get jobs in such precarious conditions was considered a 'blessing', even if the wage was low. For decades the families of political prisoners denied themselves as 'subjective beings' (Marx 1867: 724). This made the reproduction of the capital relation much easier. If the estimates of the number of political prisoners and those killed are reliable, the total amount of people affected by the 'clean environment' laws would reach more than three million all over Indonesia.

The importance of repression on the workers and forced labour certainly does not rely on the nominal amount of money this labour contributed to the New Order. Buru Island and other detention camps were not the 'cork upon which Indonesian capi-

talism floated'. They are important to consider in their role as formative moments in the capital-worker social relation. Approaches that solely focus on the penetration of money in production processes do not understand the most fundamental problem of capitalism, that is imposition of work through the commodity form, which is achieved both through the silent compulsion of economic relations and physical repression. Repression on the workers, including the employment of forced labour, became crucial to determine the conditions of wage labour. As has been noted by many experts, capitalism in Indonesia had not been fully developed by the mid-1960s, not only because of a scarcity of money capital, but also because of the existence of widespread non-capitalist and anti-capitalist social practices, especially outside Java, which were deemed 'anti-development' practices by the government.

Systematic violence against women during this period is important to consider in this context. The separation of the producers from their means of production and subsistence also meant a separation from their control over the process of social reproduction (Mies 1986). One of the main targets in the anti-Communist campaign launched by the military was a left-wing women's organization, Gerwani. Its members were accused of torturing the kidnapped generals on 1 October 1965 by mutilating their bodies and cutting off their genitals while dancing naked. Such a lurid and demonstrably false story became part of New Order political culture by symbolizing the danger of politically strong and sexual women (Wieringa 2003). It was this story that served as the reference point for the New Order restrictions on women's political activities.

The Suharto government tried to restrict women's sexual lives and thus control the demographic rates. Contrary to the previous government, the Suharto regime followed the doctrine that a large population was an obstacle to economic development (Hull and Hull 1992). While the family planning programme implemented nationwide since the 1960s was intended to control popu-

lation growth, government officials, intellectuals as well as military officers began to involve themselves in regulating the family. In many areas it was conducted by physical force and went practically unchallenged.

The mass violence of 1965-66 played an important role in diminishing women's will to resist patriarchal ideologies. The steady stream of propaganda about the fictitious sexual tortures of the generals served as a constant reminder of the dangers of assertive women. Gender relations were altered under the New Order to create new norms; instead of women active in both the family and society, the militarized government under Suharto imposed the paradigm of the income-earning male and the domesticated wife.

Conclusion

The lesson that many Indonesians learned from the violence of 1965-66 was to avoid having anything to do with politics. The New Order's conception of the public as a 'floating mass' - a mindless mass of people that easily flows in whatever direction it is told to flow - was a reflection of a very real situation: the public followed those in power, mouthing the propaganda, going through all the rituals and ceremonies, such as the elections every five years. The military state was subconsciously imagined as a beast around which one must tiptoe and whisper. It was such fear that made people acquiesce to mistreatment, from forced labour to unequal work relations, from land grabbings to military violence against women. The story of primitive accumulation is still being written in the annals of world history 'with letters of blood and fire'.

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