



# Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs

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Djakababa, Yosef (2013), The Initial Purging Policies after the 1965 Incident at Lubang Buaya, in: *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 32, 3, 11–36.  
ISSN: 1868-4882 (online), ISSN: 1868-1034 (print)

The online version of this article can be found at:  
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Published by

GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Institute of Asian Studies and  
Hamburg University Press.

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# The Initial Purging Policies after the 1965 Incident at Lubang Buaya

Yosef Djakababa

**Abstract:** After the Lubang Buaya incident on 1 October 1965 in which six top Indonesian Army generals and a lieutenant were killed, the Army began to implement a nationwide purging campaign with the assistance of civilian anti-communist groups. Thousands of PKI members, supporters and pro-Sukarno groups/individuals immediately became the target of this purge. For organisational purposes, several purging policies were released and then strictly enforced. The official purging policies that are highlighted in this paper are a series of initial directives that were released within days of the generals' executions. They do not explicitly translate into orders to kill, but are more of a guideline to help anti-communist officials classify and contain communists and other PKI followers. This article attempts to show how these initial directives evolved and also discusses competing purge policies from non-military sources. The co-existence and overlapping nature of the various directives indicate that a power struggle existed between the anti-communist group led by General Soeharto and the presidium of the *Dwikora* Cabinet who were loyal to President Soekarno.

■ Manuscript received 10 November 2013; accepted 5 February 2014

**Keywords:** Indonesia, Lubang Buaya, purge, PKI, 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement, *Dwikora* Cabinet, directives

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## Introduction

The anti-communist purge conducted in Indonesia from October 1965 onwards became one of the largest instances of mass political purging since the end of World War II. The purging happened in a number of ways, partly through mass killings and the detainment of thousands of people. According to Amnesty International, between 500,000 and a million people were killed and around a million others were detained on the grounds of their alleged involvement with the PKI (Partai Komunis *Indonesia*, Indonesian Communist Party) following the attempted coup by the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement. Several hundred thousand people were held without trial, in some cases for up to 14 years (Amnesty International 1994: 4–6).

The following remark was made by Abdul Haris Nasution, the Army Chief of Staff at the time. General Nasution, a prominent Army figure and hero of the 1945 revolution, was the only person who managed to escape the abduction attempt by the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement on 1 October 1965. He delivered his remarks in front of soldiers and employees of the Armed Forces on 25 October 1965. Their content clearly summarised the military intention of the purge, but he did not specifically target the PKI in his speech. Even so, it was obvious that he was hinting at the party:

It is clear who the enemies are within. It is clear because in every institution, including the SAB (*Staf Angkatan Bersendjata* or The Armed Forces Staff), the cleaning and regulating process are currently going on. The elements of these *political adventurers* or their supporters are being swept out, and people are now sweeping them out and hunting them down everywhere.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to note that when Nasution made his speech, the PKI still legally existed as a political party despite it having been informally banned in many places. The party only became officially illegal when General Soeharto banned it on 12 March 1966, using the 11 March 1966 (*Supersemar*) directives to legitimate his action. Prior to the official ban, local military commands in many areas of Indonesia took the initiative by declaring the PKI an illegal party. There were also cases where local PKI branches submitted to public pressure and decided to disband them-

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1 Nasution 1965: 103. This excerpt was translated and italicised by myself. The Indonesian word is “*petualang*”, which literally means “adventurer”. However, given this context, I believe the appropriate English translation is what is written above: “political adventurer”.

selves. According to the Army's official history, some of these former PKI members then joined local "anti-30<sup>th</sup> September youth groups" (*Pusat Sedjarah Angkatan Bersendjata* 1965: 124).

From his remarks, General Nasution played down the role of the Armed Forces, emphasising the role of the common people instead. Nonetheless, this paper will show that the facts were different. The role that the Armed Forces played in the systematic purge was a dominant one since they were the ones who created the directives and carried out the purging with the aid of anti-communist groups made up of civilians. Some of the initial directives discussed in this article contained detailed instructions concerning the categorisation, methods and organisation of the purging, but more importantly, the paper also shows there were directives that came from non-military sources as well, namely from the presidium of the *Dwikora*<sup>2</sup> Cabinet. The appearance of a number of sources of purging directives suggests there was a power struggle between the anti-communist camp led by General Soeharto and the pro-Sukarno loyalists in the *Dwikora* Cabinet.

What "purging" and "purge" mean in the context of the official purging policy is not automatically a policy or approval to murder; rather, the term is derived from the Indonesian word *pembersihan*, which literally means "cleaning" or "cleaning up". However, within the context of a communist purge, the word *pembersihan* can also be understood as removing someone from a certain position, detainment and to a certain extent even physically "removing" someone (i.e. killing them), despite the absence of the word "kill" in the actual policies. For the purpose of this article, I will use the terms "purge" and "purging" instead of "cleaning" and "cleaning up" since the initial policies tended to provide guidelines on how to categorise the detainees and extract information from them. Hence, the goals of the purging mandated by the directives did not include murdering any communists, although thousands of suspected Communist Party members were actually killed as a result of these policies.

This article will examine the evolution of the initial purge policies by looking at their origins, mechanism, scope and connections with their implementation.<sup>3</sup> When discussing the mass killings and mass arrests

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2 *Dwikora* stands for *Dwi Komando Rakjat* or "Two commands of the people", a popular political motto created by President Soekarno within the context of the *Konfrontasi* (Confrontation) foreign policy against the State of Malaysia, which began in 1962.

3 A slightly different version of this article was presented at a workshop entitled *New Perspectives on the 1965 Violence in Indonesia*, hosted and organised by the

which were all part of the purging activities, most of the literature on this topic assumes that the purges were military-driven or even state-sponsored terror (using anti-communist groups of civilians). The studies rarely cover or touch upon the dynamics of the power struggle that took place among the top elite/actors in the state. This article will indicate what is lacking in previous studies and show that there was actually an intense power struggle between these influential competing groups, which was reflected in the release of the purging directives.

The questions that this article intends to answer are as follows: how did the purge policies first come into being? How did they evolve? And what was the nature of the power struggle within the government in the first few crucial months after the Lubang Buaya incident as reflected in these policies? In an attempt to answer these questions, I will analyse the situational context and take a closer look at the various purge directives and policies. In addition, I will relate some of the personal experiences of those who were targeted by the policies and those who were directly involved in carrying them out.

The enforcement of the purge policies clearly established the guilty parties by categorising those who were to be arrested. Moreover, the policies also helped to instil a fear of communism within society as many investigation teams were set up throughout Indonesia, in central and regional areas, where people were arrested, interrogated and either executed or incarcerated (some for many years).

In discussing the initial purge policies, I have referred to the original purging directives now kept in the archive of the University of Indonesia's law library<sup>4</sup> in Jakarta and to the one found in the *Himpunan surat-surat keputusan/perintah yang berhubungan dengan KOPKAMTIB*<sup>5</sup>: 1965 s/d 1969 (Collection of directives/order letters that relate to KOPKAMTIB: 1965 to 1969). As for the information on how the directives were implemented, I have drawn on information obtained in personal interviews with several former political prisoners and an interview with the former

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Australian National University and Asian Studies Association of Australia and held in Canberra on 11–12 February 2013. I wish to thank Dr. Annie Pohlman from the University of Queensland, who helped me with the technical aspects of publishing this article. I would also like to express my appreciation and thanks to the blind reviewers who provided useful insights and suggestions during the revision process.

4 Pusat Dokumentasi Hukum Universitas Indonesia.

5 KOPKAMTIB: Komando Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban or The Command for Restoring Security and Order, an official and prominent Indonesian military command structure that deals with security issues and restoring national order.

head of an investigation team who was in charge of interrogating some of the political prisoners.

## The Evolvement of a Purging Policy

On 15 November 1965, in the introductory part of directive no. 22/KOTI/1965, Major General Soeharto, speaking under presidential instructions and as the supreme commander of the Indonesian Armed Forces, described the purpose of having the purge policy:

This instruction is a guideline to direct the activities in order to regulate/purge civilian personnel from units, departments and bodies and other bodies within the government apparatus from *oknum*<sup>6</sup> and elements of the contra-revolutionary movement who called themselves the “30<sup>th</sup> September Movement”, including the activities that preceded it and continuing activities, achieving correctness and balance between the effort and purpose with the maximum useful results possible.

As we can see from the quotation above, the description of the purpose of the purge policy was quite vague as it emphasised “achieving correctness and balance” and “maximum useful results”. At first glance, these may seem to be different purposes. I would argue that this vagueness in the purging instructions was intentional in order to make the process flexible enough to implicate anyone in the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement or in the PKI.

Before the issuance of directive no. 22/KOTI/1965, other documents also existed that related to this purging process. The first one was Decision Letter (*Surat Keputusan*) no. Kep-1146/10/1965, released on 10 October 1965 and signed by the Minister and Chief of staff of the Army (*menpangad*, short version for “Menteri Panglima Angkatan Darat”), Major General Pranoto Reksosamudro.<sup>7</sup> The letter only regulates purging of

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6 *Oknum*: there is no English equivalent of this term. In a slightly different context, it can mean “rogue individuals”.

7 A little background information on Major General Pranoto Reksosamudro: during the confusion of the morning of 1 October 1965 when the whereabouts of General Ahmad Yani and several of his chief staff were still unknown, President Sukarno decided to choose Major General Pranoto, a member of the late General Ahmad Yani’s staff, as the person temporarily in charge of the Army. But on that fateful day, Pranoto failed to report directly to Sukarno at Halim as he was prevented from doing so by Soeharto. In later years, Pranoto would also be purged from his position and imprisoned for his alleged involvement in the failed 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement.

remnants and sympathisers of the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement within the Army. According to this document, those involved in the counter-revolutionary movement were to be “deactivated” immediately or temporarily discharged while military justice dealt with these matters.

Although letter no. Kep-1146/10/1965 was the first to deal with the purge, the punishment given and regulated in it was not too severe since the suspected individuals were only to be decommissioned from Army service or temporarily discharged and required to return their “organic equipment” (*Perlengkapan Organik*) to the related authority. There was no categorisation of prisoners yet in this directive – that aspect would be a key characteristic of later purge regulations. As it turned out, this particular directive was released at the same time as another one in the form of a radiogram from Supreme Operational Command (KOTI). Major General Soeharto was the commander of KOTI, which spans authorities encompassing all commands within the Armed Forces. In short, KOTI deals with and coordinates operational command of all the state’s military forces, not just the Army. The KOTI radiogram directives for the purges contained more specific tasks.

The radiogram mentioned the matters that needed to be regulated immediately, such as formation of a coordinated investigative team in the central area and surrounding regions. It also recognised KOSTRAD, the Army Reserve Command under Major General Soeharto, as the unit responsible for restoring security after the failed coup attempted by the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement. Furthermore, KOSTRAD was given full authority to appoint members of the investigative team, which would include intelligence officers, military prosecutors and the public prosecutor’s office. Most significantly, however, KOTI’s radiogram no. T-0265/G-5/1965 issued on 10 October 1965 was the first known directive sent to every branch of the Armed Forces to form investigative teams for purging the counter-revolutionary movement. In addition, all the information collected from the detainee interrogation process would be used to eradicate the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement. The central investigative team that was set up was ultimately responsible to KOSTRAD’s chief officer in charge of restoring national security.

From the content of this radiogram, it was clear that KOSTRAD had the ultimate authority to implement the purge. The formation of investigative teams in the central and surrounding regions was the direct responsibility of KOSTRAD. Soeharto, who was head of KOSTRAD, also had the authority to appoint members of these investigative teams. By consolidating all control under his direct command, Major General Soeharto established a well-organised hierarchy of individuals fully

committed to eradicating communists from Indonesian society. Soeharto's position as the commander of KOSTRAD was ultimately strengthened on 1 November 1965 when President Sukarno appointed him Commander of KOPKAMTIB (Operations Command to Restore Security and Order). In this position, Soeharto had, in fact, become the ruler of the Indonesian state since he was given unlimited emergency powers.

Following the release of radiogram T-0265/G-5/1965 on 10 October 1965, KOTI issued another one on 12 October 1965 with the number T-0269 A/G.5/1965. This document addressed all the Cabinet's ministers, *Pepelrada*,<sup>8</sup> coordinating ministers, KOTI command officials and *Pantja Tunggal*<sup>9</sup> throughout Indonesia. The radiogram instructed those officials to temporarily discharge any civil servants who had had unexplained absences since 30 September 1965. Moreover, the radiogram also instructed all departments and government bodies to conduct a daily roll call for their staff.

As indicated in radiogram T-0269 A/G.5/1965, one of the first official reasons for implicating people in the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement was simply because the individuals in question had taken time off on that date without explaining why. At that point in time, the categorisation of people to be purged had not been established yet. Guilt, as this particular directive demonstrated, was merely determined by whether one had shown up for work or not. In many cases, those who were affected by the purge were detained – or ended up dead.

## The Directives of the *Dwikora* Cabinet

As the Army readied itself to eliminate those who may have been involved in the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement, the presidium of the *Dwikora* Cabinet – which included loyalists supporting President Sukarno such as Dr. J. Leimena, Chairul Saleh and Dr. Subandrio – managed to release their own directives in an effort to balance the military dominance of the purging process. They issued the directives on 20 October 1965 under Cabinet letter no. 47a/D/Instr/1965. The first one contained regulations on establishing special teams within each ministerial department to se-

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8 *Pepelrada*: Panitia Penjelenggara Dwikora Daerah or the Regional Authorities to Implement Dwikora.

9 *Pantja Tunggal*: a quintumvirate, the five-member group of local officials (at provincial level), as defined by President Soekarno. They were the Governor, Regional Army or Navy commander, Local Police Commissioner, Public Prosecutor and representatives of the National Front in the region. See Anwar 2006: 287.

cure state assets. The directive also defined the members of these teams: they were to come from civil defence and include prominent figures in mass organisations. Above all, though, they had to be loyal to President Sukarno. The letter also instructed the departments to remain vigilant regarding any efforts at subversion or sabotage.

The second directive from the presidium was released the same day, on 20 October 1965, under no. 48a/D/Instr/1965. This document was addressed to all coordinating and Cabinet ministers and included more detailed instructions requiring any members of mass organisations in each department to declare their position on Sukarno's teachings. This particular directive stated that while waiting for the President to find a political solution, all mass organisations within the government that were known to be involved with the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement had to stop all their activities temporarily. The directive also gave instructions to dishonourably discharge those *Oknum*, or "rogue officials", who were clearly involved in G.30.S (the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement). Both directives required the government departments to carry out instructions immediately and then report back to the *Dwikora* Cabinet's presidium.

These Cabinet directives represent the Sukarno loyalists' efforts to help the President retain his waning powers since they emphasise the importance of total obedience to Sukarno and his teachings. The directives also indicate the subtle but intense power struggle going on between the Armed Forces under Major General Soeharto and President Sukarno, which would last for several more months.

## The Military Response

The Armed Forces responded to the Cabinet's directives by issuing a further directive of their own on 12 November 1965: no. INS-1015/1965, released and signed by the Ministry of Defence and Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, General A. H. Nasution. This particular letter was significant because it was the first in a series of directives that provided detailed classifications of the type of individuals who were to be purged or "secured" immediately on the grounds of their alleged involvement with the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement and PKI. These criteria in the directive were defined as follows:

A. Those who are clearly involved:

1. were involved in planning or knew about the counter-revolutionary plan, but did not report it to the authorities;
2. are aware of the movement's goals and have implemented activities in order to assist it in achieving them.

B. Those who are clearly involved in an indirect way:

1. After finding out about the counter-revolutionary movement, the person/group showed attitudes, either in their acts or in what they said, that indicated agreement with the movement.

C. Points indicating who can be presumed to be involved directly or indirectly:

1. [the person] became a regular active member or officer in an organisation that is directly involved with the PKI and its mass organisations and other mass organisations that have a relationship with the PKI or its mass organisations, with no attempt to condemn the counter-revolutionary movement, but does not belong to the A or B classifications;

2. According to the previously known antecedents, they have some involvement in the “Madiun affair” or the counter-revolutionary movement, but do not condemn it;

3. Is a member of an organisation mentioned in point 1, but is not actively involved in it.

This particular directive was also the first of its kind in that it clearly mentioned the PKI as being solely responsible for the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement. As mentioned at the beginning, the PKI would not be banned officially until 12 March 1966 despite the fact that it had already been banned informally in many parts of the country prior to the attempted coup. By November 1965, the party had become the target of intense negative propaganda regarding its involvement in the Lubang Buaya affair. Even though the PKI had been accused of killing the officers at Lubang Buaya, this does not lessen the significance of directive INS-1015/1965. The existence of this official instruction lent official weight to such suspicions, far beyond the press’s accusations of PKI involvement.

The directive’s classification of prisoners became the standard template for many subsequent purge policies for several years. However, the directive only aimed at those who were members of the Armed Forces – the Army, Navy, Air Force and Police Force; it did not include any other government departments or other civilian organisations. What made this directive so compelling was not only its detailed classification of who should be purged, but more importantly, it included details of the retribution recommended for those who were considered part of the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement. Directive no. INS-1015/1965 also regulated the procedure for establishing investigative teams and their operational structure within government departments. It aimed to coordinate the establishment of various inspection teams while providing further sur-

veillance and means of punishment for culprits within the Armed Forces during the purge process.

Three days after the release of Nasution's directive no. INS-1015/1965 on 15 November 1965, General Soeharto – in his capacity as KOTI Chief of Staff and and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and Commander of KOPKAMTIB – issued another directive, no. 22/KOTI/1965. The content of this document mirrored the instructions previously released by General Nasution in INS-1015/1965, but the main difference between the two orders was in their jurisdiction and operational targets: Soeharto's directive, no. 22/KOTI/1965, had considerably wider targets since its aim was to purge the civilian personnel at all levels of bureaucracy, while Nasution's letter, no. INS-1015/1965, only regulated civilian and military personnel within the Armed Forces. With the issue of Soeharto's directive, the military-backed goal of purging communist individuals and groups escalated dramatically.

Through the release of these official military orders, there was an obvious overlap with other instructions, especially with directives released by the presidium of the *Dwikora* Cabinet. As a consequence, it was inevitable that some parties would question the validity of the Cabinet's directives. The two directives (nos. 47a/D/Instr/1965 and 48a/D/Instr/1965) did not explicitly declare that the PKI had masterminded the Lubang Buaya affair, although both supported the purging of those involved with the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement. Furthermore, these two letters did not provide details of classifications of targeted individuals and groups, which is in contrast to the instructions from the Armed Forces, which contain clearly defined categories and targets. Rather, the Cabinet's directives were more concerned about maintaining the investigation teams' loyalty to President Sukarno.

From this information alone we can see some substantial disparities within the state apparatus in dealing with the purging. The fact that the Armed Forces released two detailed and precisely delineated letters for the purging only reinforced how much they distrusted the *Dwikora* Cabinet's directives. The dispute between Sukarno and the Armed Forces was becoming more and more evident, especially after the latter began implementing General Soeharto's KOTI instructions as the basis for purging in all governmental departments.

The tensions between these two camps were obvious during the President's speech at the meeting he convened with KOTI officials on 20 November 1965. President Sukarno addressed his concerns about KOTI's purging activities by telling the audience that his own Minister of Education, Mrs. Artati, had come to see him; almost in tears, she had

reported that KOTI had forced all of her assistants to be “deactivated”, including those individuals whom President Sukarno had known to be loyal to him for years. Sukarno described these “deactivated” individuals as “progressive revolutionary nationalists”, not members of the PKI (Soekarno 1965: 16). The President expressed his deep concern at the situation by saying the following:

To resolve this problem, my brothers, we really have to understand who are *Gestapu*<sup>10</sup> and who are not. Don’t take any action because *Gestapu* has PKI people in it, otherwise anyone who is a progressive revolutionary will be “dangerous”. *Nah*, that is a mistake, brothers, a mistake (Soekarno 1965: 16).

At the same meeting, President Sukarno also addressed the issue of overlapping authority between the *Dwikora* Cabinet’s directives (no. 47a/D/Instr/1965 and no. 48a/D/Instr/1965) and those released by KOTI (no. 22/KOTI/1965). He asserted that, based on the last KOTI meeting, it had already been agreed that the *Dwikora* Cabinet would deal with the government’s civilian employees, with the exception of those staff who were working in defence and security (*Hankam*); people from those departments would fall under the responsibility of the Armed Forces. Sukarno further stated that

he hoped that all the members of the Armed Forces would understand this matter, so our nation will not become something like what it is [sic!]. Recently, everyone has been divided and been hostile towards each other (Soekarno 1965: 16).

Concerned about this overlapping authority, President Sukarno summoned Major General Soeharto, the Chief of Staff of KOTI, to explain the matter to the Cabinet at a meeting on 20 November 1965. Major General Soeharto’s response was to assert that both the KOTI directives and the Cabinet’s were the same in their “soul” (essence).<sup>11</sup> He further suggested that there was

no harm for the Armed Forces and Police to be the presidium’s tools in addition to the public prosecutor’s office in order to help

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10 *Gestapu* is short for *Gerakan September Tiga Puluh* (30<sup>th</sup> September Movement). In later years, the writing of the term will change into G.30.S. The use of the word *gestapu* is interesting since it suggest the similarity of the group to the brutality of the Nazi Secret Police the “Gestapo” during the Second World War. Some would argue that the term was deliberately used in that way as part of the organised effort to purge the communist.

11 The word that Soeharto used was *Jima*.

out the teams that would implement their tasks in specific departments (Soeharto 1965: 22–23).

At the end of the meeting, Soeharto concluded:

So now it should be clear; there should be no more doubt about the implementation of the already released KOTI and Presidium’s directives, because the soul of both regulations are the same. Only, the responsibility remains in the hands of the Presidium, with instruction, guided by the released instruction.<sup>12</sup>

If we look carefully at Soeharto’s explanation that “responsibility remains in the hands of the Presidium”, we can see that Soeharto had, in fact, outmanoeuvred Sukarno and his *Dwikora* Cabinet loyalists by attributing the responsibility for the purging policy to the presidium. Although, Soeharto repeatedly underscored the similarity in the “soul” of the directives, he never discussed the contents, which were actually very different. By doing this, he succeeded in implementing a policy following the military’s procedure rather than following the Cabinet’s, while at the same time he cleverly avoided taking responsibility for his actions by acknowledging the presidium’s authority.

Even though he emphasised the similarity between the two sets of directives, he was simultaneously suggesting the participation of the Armed Forces and Police in the other departmental investigative teams. As we will see later in this article, the military clearly dominated the investigation and classification process, not only targeting PKI members, but also President Sukarno’s loyal followers.

Nonetheless, the presidium was not ready to accept defeat despite being outmanoeuvred by Soeharto. In fact, the members managed to release another directive signed by Dr. Subandrio, who was the First Vice-Premier: Presidium Decision No. Aa/B/133/1965 dated 22 November 1965, which appointed Brigadier General (Pol) Moedjoko, M. Aminuddin Aziz and Oei Tjoe Tat in a newly formed Presidium Committee for specific tasks “to supervise and coordinate the finalisation of the purge policy against those civilian *oknum* who are involved with the G.30.S within and outside the state”. Here we can see the presidium’s attempt to balance the authority of KOTI/KOPKAMTIB in doing the purging. Ultimately, the Presidium Committee was powerless, though, as

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12 Soeharto 1965: 22–23. As a Javanese, Soeharto’s remarks sometimes could confuse people, even native speaker, since his word choosing and sentence structures are often do not follow standard Indonesian grammar. Hence, they could be interpreted in several ways. What I provide here is the closest translation and meaning that I can do for his remarks.

it did not have enough authority to influence any further actions challenging the might of Soeharto and his followers.<sup>13</sup> The committee formed by the presidium merely ended up as a semi-official fact-finding team for President Sukarno.<sup>14</sup>

The fate of the members of the Cabinet's presidium was a tragic one: with the exception of Dr. J. Leimana, the Soeharto regime imprisoned both Subandrio and Chairul Saleh. Chairul Saleh died in prison in 1967, while Subandrio was put on trial later under the authority of an Extraordinary Military Court (*Mabmillub*<sup>15</sup>) and received the death sentence. That was reduced to life imprisonment later, however.

## Implementation of the Purging Policy

In response to the ongoing purging and mass killings, President Sukarno summoned his Cabinet members and military officials from KOTI to a meeting on 20 November 1965. He openly expressed his concern there, saying: "Never in the history of the Indonesian Revolution [...] have the people been this hostile to each other. Not even during the Madiun affair" (Soekarno 1965: 17). Sukarno's reference to the Madiun affair ironically resonated with what the Army leadership had been emphasising about the nature of the G.30.S as another episode of PKI treachery.

According to Amnesty International, between 500,000 and one million Indonesians lost their lives in less than a year due to the purge (Amnesty International 1994: 16). Although the PKI would not be declared illegal until 12 March 1966, mass arrests and killings started in early October 1965, not long after the G.30.S's failure, and they still showed no

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13 I disagree with the assertion by a reviewer of this article that the fact-finding commission was set up by KOTI; the document that I obtained clearly shows that it was the *Dwikora* Cabinet's presidium (as ordered by President Sukarno) that set up the committee using the directive Presidium Decision No. Aa/B/133/1965 dated 22 November 1965. The letter was signed by Dr. Subandrio, the first deputy premier (*Waperdam I*) and a member of the presidium.

14 In his book *Memoir Oei Tjoe Tat: Pembantu Presiden Soekarno*, Oei Tjoe Tat described his experience on this committee. While the body was able to collect information about the approximate number of people who were killed in the mass violence, it did not dare announce the exact number of dead, instead releasing a much lower figure. In private, however, Oei Tjoe Tat confided the true number of victims to Sukarno when the President asked him about it (Tjoe, Tat Oei 1995).

15 *Mabmillub: Mabkamah militer Luar biasa* (Extraordinary Military Court), specially established to try high-ranking/prominent individuals who were allegedly directly involved in the failed coup.

sign of stopping by November while the political momentum continually shifted towards the anti-communist camp under General Soeharto. Even so, Soeharto calculated his political moves carefully as Sukarno still had many loyal followers within the Armed Forces and the government.

In the following section, the article will examine the actual implementation of the purge policy by drawing on information obtained in interviews with those who were detained in the aftermath of the Lubang Buaya affair.

## Personal Accounts from Former Political Prisoners

The purge, or “cleaning up” process, came in several phases, as the initial official directives mentioned in the previous sections have indicated. As a result, some political prisoners remained free for several years after the Lubang Buaya killings before they got arrested, but there were others who were arrested much sooner. Of the millions of people arrested in the months after the Lubang Buaya affair, hundreds of thousands remained incarcerated for up to fourteen years without any official charges being made or a trial staged for them (Amnesty International 1994: 6).

One example was M, who was an employee at the Trikora Steel Mill in Banten. He was arrested on 2 October 1965, the second day after the killings at Lubang Buaya were discovered. M was accused of having prior knowledge of the Council of Generals’ plan to take over the government and of failing to report the information to the authorities (M 2006). M asserted in his defence that the information was based on rumours that had been circulating widely prior to Untung’s announcement on the radio. In effect, M gave information that is known in Indonesia as *rabasia umum*, or a “public secret”. During his interrogation, the military investigator asked him about his sources, but M insisted that he had only heard the news as a rumour. Unlike many of his friends, M was never tortured during his interrogation. Despite clear directives from the *Dwikora* Cabinet’s presidium to establish civilian investigation teams, from my findings and other sources, almost all the interrogations that took place during the “clean-up” process were under strict military supervision (Roosa, Ratih, and Farid 2004). There were, indeed, instances where those who were arrested and interrogated did not experience any torture, but afterwards they needed to explain to fellow prisoners why this had not been the case (Roosa 2008: 32).

In the end, formal charges were never brought against M, nor did he ever face a trial. M spent a total of thirteen years in prison as a catego-

ry “B” prisoner, which is defined as one who was “clearly involved in an indirect way and indicated agreement with the contra-revolutionary movement” (see above). Given the nature of his arrest and incarceration, M’s experience was parallel to thousands of others who shared similar experiences – or went through even worse suffering.

The experience of Mr. SA, the first secretary of CDB PKI Banten, contrasted with M.’s. At first, Mr. SA managed to flee and hide for several weeks until he was captured on 29 October 1965. He was not only a regular member of the PKI, but had an official position in the party. After his arrest, he was taken directly to the headquarters of Military District Command where a certain Captain Chasman from Cirebon and his right-hand man Lieutenant Jazuli repeatedly tortured him (SA 2006). Under severe torture, Mr. SA was forced to admit that the PKI was solely responsible for mounting a rebellion to take over the government.

Mr. SA denied all accusations. As a result, the beating escalated, causing him to lose consciousness, sometimes for as much as two or three days (SA 2006). After coming round again, a member of the Military Police interrogated him anew. The purpose of the interrogation, however, was not to determine whether or not he was guilty, but rather to extract a “favourable” confession and information from Communist Party members. In this context, “favourable” implied an admission that the PKI was responsible for the killings of the generals at Lubang Buaya.

The information collected at the interrogation would then be used as evidence in court to show that the PKI not only planned, but also launched a coup using the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement as its cover. From what Mr. SA described in his experience, the purpose of this interrogation was consistent with radiogram no. T-0265/G-5/1965 from KOTI’s Chief of Staff, who had instructed the Army in the directives to “conduct questioning of all prisoners/detainees to find material needed to destroy the adventurism of the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement”.

Mr. SA was put in the “A” category, which by definition was for those “who were clearly involved in planning or who knew about the plan, but did not report it to the authorities”. Mr. SA stayed in prison until 1978 without ever facing any official charges for his alleged involvement in the coup.

Another detainee, Mr. H, was a Member of Parliament from the PKI. The Army arrested him on 21 October 1965. During one of the interrogation sessions, Sujono, the chief prosecutor, asked him about the whereabouts of his Mercedes-Benz, the official car used by members of Parliament. Mr. H replied that being an MP, he did not have a Mercedes, but just a small Mazda (H 2006).

The prosecutor did not believe him, even though he admitted they had already confiscated his official Mazda. The prosecutor continued trying to extort Mr. H by asking him to write to his family and get them to replace the tyres of the car in exchange for some “favours”. Mr. H refused to cooperate – and was spat upon as a result (H 2006). Mr. H spent four years in Salemba Prison in Jakarta before being moved to Buru Island, part of the first wave of prisoners to land there. “I was sent to Buru Island as number 001, so I was considered the state’s no. 1 enemy. Even Pram’s [Pramoedya Ananta Toer, the famous writer] number was 007” (H 2006). Mr. H stayed in Buru for ten years. Like most other prisoners, he never faced any formal charges, nor did he ever see his official letter of arrest or face trial. He was told that he belonged to the “B” category, but there was never any formal confirmation of this fact. Citing that there was “not enough evidence” to convict him, the government eventually released Mr. H in 1979 after he had spent a total of fourteen years in prison (H 2006).

As for detainees from the upper echelons of the political hierarchy, there was Mr. SR, a member of the *Dwikora* Cabinet who had previously been the Minister of Electricity and Energy. He was detained on 18 March 1966, exactly seven days after President Sukarno released the letter of order (*Supersemar*). The only “official” letter of arrest for Mr. SR came in the form of Announcement No. 5 regarding the “safety” of the ministers (*Pengumuman No. 5: Tentang pengamanan Menteri-Menteri*).

General Soeharto issued the announcement on behalf of President Sukarno. It stated the following:

Some of the ministers in the Cabinet became the target of the people, who saw indications of their involvement in the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement. Or at least there were doubts about their intention to help the President/Great Leader of the Revolution/MPRS mandate (Soeharto 1993: 135).

The announcement also mentioned the fact that the Army “reluctantly thinks that safety precautions are needed in order to prevent those ministers from becoming the target of people’s uncontrolled anger” (Soeharto 1993: 136–137). The seemingly extravagant display of concern was, in fact, a pretext to arrest Cabinet ministers who were loyal to Sukarno. Despite the announcement mentioning the ministers’ “safety”, most of them were arrested without any official charges. Mr. SR was then “put into safe keeping”. The ministers were initially detained in the Senayan

athletic complex in Southern Jakarta for a week before being taken to the Military Prison House (RTM = *Rumab Tabanan Militer*<sup>16</sup>) (SR 2006).

Mr. SR did not receive his formal letter of detention until a year later. While he was in prison, he was never officially charged. “They even treated ministers like that, not just the others”, he said. “So there was no way to find out how long we were going to be detained” (SR 2006). Mr. SR remained in prison for twelve years – without trial.

The experiences outlined above are just a few examples of what thousands of detainees suffered because of the purging policy. There is quite a large amount of literature containing accounts of prisoners’ experiences now, much of which was only published when Soeharto’s New Regime toppled in 1998. The descriptions of those who experienced the purge recounted in this article were drawn from my own personal interviews with some of these former detainees.

The reason for including the experiences of former detainees here is not only to show how intensely the purging policy was implemented, but more importantly, to highlight the prominence of the practice of categorising prisoners and extracting information from them. Whether or not this was achieved through torture, the mandate granted in the initial directives to obtain information and prove PKI involvement in the communist plot was fulfilled. Moreover, the categorisation of the prisoners had, in fact, occurred and been put into practice quite effectively – indeed, this was one of the most prominent characteristics of the purging policy.

Despite the evident power struggle between President Sukarno’s loyalists in the presidium of the *Dwikora* Cabinet and General Soeharto, the anti-communist, which was reflected in the overlapping series of purging directives, the actual implementation of these instructions overwhelmingly followed the military regulations, not those of the pro-Sukarno presidium. The fact can be seen judging from the following actions: the anti-communist group had effectively repositioned itself and slowly but surely begun removing the pro-communist factions within the government bureaucracy by as early as November 1965, just a month after the Lubang Buaya affair. The anti-communist Armed Forces further took action by removing other possible sources of opposition from the pro-Sukarno group whom they thought might hamper Soeharto’s military ascendancy to power.

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16 Located in East Jakarta, it is a special prison set up to housed higher ranking government/military officials.

The following section will feature an account by a non-military interrogator who played an integral role in implementing the purge policy. He was stationed on the island of Flores, where the mass killings and other forms of purging in the aftermath of the Lubang Buaya affair also occurred, albeit not in the same magnitude as the incidents in Java and Bali. Nonetheless, his account will shed some light on how the state apparatus in a remote area of the country followed (or did not follow) the purging policy directives issued by the central government.

## The Interrogator's Account

Kemal Idris, a prominent anti-communist general and commander of one of the most active Army units to conduct the purging operations, made the following remark in his biography:

There are those who became victims because they had been wrongly accused or the investigation found they were not involved in any way. But [even so], it is better to proceed in a *safety first* manner (Anwar et al. 1996: 195; italics in original version).

In his statement, General Idris gave a clear illustration of the military methods used during the “cleaning up” process. The Army arrested people indiscriminately, even targeting people who only had the remotest of connections with the PKI. To understand the logic behind the purge, we also need to look through the eyes of those who were directly involved in the process, particularly the individuals who conducted the interrogations. Mr. S was one of those people.

Prior to the Lubang Buaya affair in Jakarta, Mr. S worked as a public prosecutor (*Jaksa*) in the city of Ende, Flores Island, in the province of East Nusa Tenggara. The situation during the aftermath of the Lubang Buaya affair in Java and Bali has already been covered adequately by many authors, but the situation in more remote places such as Flores and the Eastern Nusa Tenggara islands has not been studied as thoroughly, with the possible exception of two Australian academics, Paul Webb and Steven Farram (Farram and Webb 2005) and more recent coverage by John Prior (Prior 2011), who focused more on the role and reaction of the Catholic church organisations and individuals in Flores during the turbulent 1965–1967 period (Prior 2011).

During the purging or “cleaning up” period, Mr. S was the head of the G.30.S investigation team in Ende. When he was appointed to that position in 1967, he had already gained a reputation as a staunch anti-communist official in the prosecutor's (*Kejaksaaan*) office. His reputation

stemmed from an earlier event that had happened on 16 August 1965 when members of SOBSI, the PKI-affiliated labour organisation, the Pemuda Rakyat (People's Youth) and Gerwani went to the public prosecutor's office in Ende en masse to demonstrate against its investigation of the PKI's illegal seizure of forest land for agricultural use. During the demonstrations, a brawl erupted between PKI supporters and security personnel. After that, Mr. S was dismissed from his position at the prosecutor's office because of his involvement in the fighting.

In late 1967, however, he was reinstated in his old position as his superior had concluded that S had justified his actions by saying he had been fighting to defend the prosecutor's office from a PKI attack at the time. Not long after resuming his old position, Mr. S was appointed head of the G.30.S investigation team with jurisdiction encompassing the city of Ende and Manggarai District.

Mr. S's investigation team consisted of fifteen people: three civilians and twelve military personnel, including a number of military policemen (S 2004). With military personnel dominating the investigation team, one can conclude that the Armed Forces had the greatest influence and interest in the purge. Mr. S was only one of many people who were involved in implementing the purge process since hundreds or even thousands of other investigative teams were set up throughout Indonesia. His account will hopefully shed some light on the nature of the work done by the investigation teams.

## The Interrogations

"*Nab*, there were no official instructions that they all had to be killed", said Mr. S regarding the treatment of the prisoners. "There was no instruction like that. But in reality, after I questioned them, five of the people I believed to be the most active disappeared" (S 2004).

The exact number murdered will probably remain unknown because of the difficulty in obtaining accurate information. Only a small number of these *Tapols* (political prisoners) would ever see a trial in front of the special military tribunal established to process the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement. The rest were incarcerated in prisons throughout Indonesia and were subjected to a mandatory indoctrination programme before being released and reintegrated into society (Direktorat Jenderal Sosial Politik 1989: 49).

Although the instructions on the establishment of these investigative teams were issued as early as mid-October 1965, their actual implementation varied from region to region. For example, in the regency of

Ende on Flores Island, the team only became fully operational in 1967 (S 2004). Being the head of the investigation team in Ende, Mr. S divulged that he had had to deal with around 120 people in one day on one occasion! As a result, the interrogations went on for several days and nights (S 2004). Out of those 120 people, he estimated that only twenty per cent had actually been members of the PKI or its affiliated mass organisation, while the remaining eighty per cent were just common people who had no link to the PKI or the G.30.S at all and were not involved in any political activities either (S 2004):

If I asked the people “What’s the PKI?”, [they would answer] “Christian Party of Indonesia, Catholic Party of Indonesia”. *Loh*, why did you join the PKI? Their reason for joining the PKI was so they could avoid hard labour – if anything happened, the PKI would stand up for them and take care of them. That was the only reason. “Do you know that the PKI is the Communist Party?” – “No, I don’t”, [they would answer] (S 2004).

As a public prosecutor, Mr. S was the nominal head of the investigation team, but it was actually the Armed Forces that held the decision-making power. Throughout the interrogation process, members of the Forces often came to the barracks where the prisoners were being held and asked Mr. S’s permission to fetch them from their cells for further “questioning”. Although Mr. S feared repercussions from the soldiers if he disobeyed, he managed to avoid signing the forms authorising the prisoners’ release. Unfortunately, the soldiers went and took the prisoners out of their cells anyway. He somehow knew the prisoners would be killed, he said (S 2004).

In our interview, Mr. S insisted that it had mainly been civilian members of anti-communist mass organisations that killed the prisoners, albeit with strong encouragement from the military. “The point is, the BAP [official interrogation reports] are useless”, said Mr. S, commenting on the interrogation procedure. He further admitted that the interrogation was merely a formality; the questioning was not done to determine whether a person was guilty or innocent, but to find a reason to eliminate the prisoner.

If a person got arrested, it was simply assumed he was guilty. Whatever information emerged from the interrogations was ignored if it did not fit in with the information that the interrogators wanted. From the accounts of former political prisoners, it is clear that the interrogators vehemently insisted on establishing a connection between the PKI and G.30.S, regardless of what the detainees said. The interrogation process was only intended to find incriminating evidence about a person’s in-

volvement with the G.30.S, no matter how remote the connection might be. Prisoners often “admitted” whatever the interrogators wanted to hear when they were continuously exposed to physical and mental torture.

Mr. S’s account is particularly interesting as he insisted that the BAP reports were useless, hence all interrogation was conducted as a mere formality, no longer to collect information, as it used to be. From his account, it seems the investigation team in Ende never really tried to find out if a detainee was involved with the G.30.S or not. What Mr. S said is in contrast with the experience of the detainees outlined in the previous sections, where the process of interrogation still essentially followed the instructions given in radiogram T-0265/G-5/1965 from KOTI’s Chief of Staff: “conduct questioning of all prisoners/detainees to find any material needed to destroy the adventurism of the G.30.S gang”.

The situation and attitude of the interrogation team described by Mr. S were different to what detainees experienced in Java. The difference can perhaps be explained from the time when the investigation team in Flores was set up and ready to work. The team only began to be operational by late 1967, two years after the Lubang Buaya event. By late 1967, President Sukarno was no longer in office; General Soeharto had already replaced him as President of Indonesia in March that year. With the changes in national leadership and Soeharto already in firm control of the state, the purging directives issued in early 1965 lost their urgency somewhat in terms of proper implementation. From being quite thoroughly implemented and enforced in the early days, shortly after the killings at Lubang Buaya, by 1967 the interrogation results were no longer needed and the questioning of prisoners was deemed to be a mere formality.

If that really was the case, though, why did the state apparatus in a remote region like Flores bother to go through the step of forming an investigation team and keep on detaining people? The answer is possibly to be found in the existence of tensions within the community prior to the Lubang Buaya incident on 1 October 1965 and the mass killings that mostly took place in 1966 along with the continued spill-over effect of the national campaign to cut the communist movement down “to its roots”.<sup>17</sup>

From what Mr. S described, the Army and members of anti-communist organisations played a seminal role in the purging that occurred in Flores. Although the purges were already relatively late in terms

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17 “Down to its roots” – *sampai ke akar-akarnya* in Indonesian – is an example of propaganda rhetoric that was often used at that time when referring to eradicating the communist influence.

of the national timeline, some people still felt compelled to obey and carry out the purging directives, perhaps as a means of showing their support, participation and loyalty to the new administration – the New Order regime.

In describing his personal convictions as the head of the investigative team, Mr. S said:

My personal feeling was: “Why would these people be punished if they are innocent? What did they do wrong? Why?” That’s one [reason]. The second one is that they [the soldiers] were angry with me because I never signed any of the prisoner release forms (S 2004).

Consequently, the soldiers became suspicious and forced him to attend one of the executions sessions one evening just to make sure that he witnessed what was happening to the prisoners:

I didn’t want to go, but then they took me and I witnessed the killings for the first time. They picked me up around 3 a.m. Three military people came over and took me there. I was shocked [by what I saw]; I saw people being executed – cut into pieces with machetes. I couldn’t eat any rice or meat for a week [after that] (S 2004).

Mr. S also attended a public execution. It was the killing of John Dimu, a well-known Pemuda Rakyat figure. He was allegedly present at Lubang Buaya and witnessed the killings of the generals. Mr. S described John Dimu’s execution in some detail; he saw him tied on a wooden cross in preparation for his public execution by burning.

That was when I realised just how strong a human body was. As the flames began engulfing him, the man looked at me and yelled: ‘I’m innocent!’. He was able to pull and break the wire that held him,

said Mr. S. John Dimu’s body then exploded. Mr. S said he could remember the smell and sound of his flesh burning to this day (S 2004).

Mr. S’s account suggests that not only did the Army run the whole purging process, but they were also suspicious of any acts of defiance, regardless of the position the individual in question had in society. In the official instructions for the purge, all the investigative teams were meant to receive some “assistance” from the Armed Forces. In reality, the latter not only provided assistance, but it played a central role in implementing the directives, i.e. in the arrest and interrogation of suspects and in the ultimate selection of those to be jailed or executed.

The civilian personnel in the investigative teams worked under close military supervision and often struggled with their role, as in the case of Mr. S. Their personal struggles were sometimes reflected in their own actions and were occasionally interpreted as sympathy with the prisoners.

## Conclusion

The official purging policy was developed in a series of directives released by the *Dwikora* Cabinet's presidium and Military Supreme Command (KOTI) respectively. As this article has attempted to show, the issuing of these overlapping directives from different sources revealed an intense power struggle between President Sukarno's loyalists and the anti-communist group led by General Soeharto. Sukarno did question the legitimacy of the military purging orders, but Soeharto managed to outmanoeuvre both him and the loyalists in the presidium of the *Dwikora* Cabinet by insisting that the "soul" of both directives was, in fact, the same. As a result, the purging continued to spread, albeit on the basis of Soeharto's military directives.

Once again, it is very important to mention that the terms "purge" and "purging" employed in this article have been used in lieu of the word "clean up" (*pembersihan*), which was chosen in the original Indonesian documents. The word "purge" was chosen rather than "clean up" since the activities and instructions written in the directives were merely to provide guidelines for the purging. Although it is widely known that those who were "purged" or "cleaned up" by the military and civilian operations were actually killed, the directives themselves never contained specific orders to murder anyone. However, in Indonesian, if the word *pembersihan* is used in the context of political purging, it not only means removing someone from their previous position, but it can also have the meaning of eliminating (i.e. killing). The use of the word "purge" in this article should be understood in this second sense.

The directives that were enforced included a detailed categorisation of those who were to be arrested because of their alleged involvement in the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement. Furthermore, the directives also regulated the formation of investigative teams from the centre of the country down to the regional level and urged these teams to seek military assistance whenever necessary.

In this paper, accounts have been included from former political prisoners and a chief interrogator from one of the investigative teams. These reflect the actual implementation of the official purge policy. The accounts provided by those who experienced the purge first-hand have

provided valuable insights into how the Armed Forces dominated the process. News of people arrested by the Armed Forces and eventually killed circulated quickly and widely in a society where oral culture is more prominent than a written one. Moreover, the sheer number of people being arrested made it difficult to avoid learning about the reality of military control over this process.

The combination of all these factors and the rampant propaganda in the media all contributed to a convincing, self-sustaining anti-communist campaign that laid the foundation for further anti-communist mobilisation, which Soeharto's New Order military regime successfully deployed to consolidate and maintain its power.

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