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THE CONVOLUTED HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE SEPTEMBER 30th MOVEMENT IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT:

Over half a century after the assassination of six right-leaning Army officers which led to the creeping coup of Indonesia's first president, possibly over a million deaths in the subsequent purge of the left, and three decades of a military dictatorship; many details of the so-called September 30th Movement are still shrouded in mystery. Contrary information and the lack of documentary evidence has led to varying historical narratives in the wake of events. This paper attempts to provide a broad outline of the evolving understanding of the events in Jakarta on September 30th, 1965.

In the predawn hours of the fateful morning of October 1st, 1965, several top members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in conjunction with a handful of dissenting military officers conducted a putsch to remove right-leaning Army officers from the Indonesian political scene. The movement resulted in catastrophic failure and the removal of President Sukarno from power, implementation of a military dictatorship under General Suharto, drastic realignment of the country's domestic and international policies, and the mass murder of possibly over one million left leaning Indonesians. Despite The September 30th Movement, or *Gestapu* (*Gerakan Tiga Puluh September* as it is known in Indonesia), being one of the most pivotal geopolitical turning points during the Cold War in the Pacific littoral, the exact details of what occurred that morning have been shrouded in mystery. Contrary information, lack of documentary evidence, and 33 years of an uncooperating authoritarian government in Indonesia have resulted in numerous, often extremely varying, historical narratives emerging in the wake of events. The evolution of the understanding of what occurred in 1965 itself has become an extremely important part of modern Indonesian historiography. This paper attempts to provide a broad outline of the changing narratives and understanding of *Gestapu* over the course of half a century following 1965.

One of the earliest academic works on the topic was published in early 1966 by Willem Frederik Wertheim, a professor at the University of Amsterdam. Wertheim examines the early evidence available at the time and cautiously paints a picture contrary to the official narrative being propagated by General Suharto and the tightly controlled Indonesian press which placed direct blame on the Indonesian Communist Party. Concluding that "there is little to prove that it was the PKI which started the whole affair" and that "there are many more indications disproving such a possibility,"¹ Wertheim determines that it is highly probable that the coup was an internal army affair.

The following year, Cornell University professor Ruth T. McVey took a far less cautious approach in her Preface to the 1967 edition of *Indonesia*.² Ignoring the official narrative and using no uncertain terms, McVey described the events as a movement conducted by middle-rank army officers which resulted in "power literally to fall into his [Suharto's] hands" after Sukarno failed to support the officers' actions. McVey does not bring up a possibility of PKI involvement. Instead, she describes an Indonesian Army which gained political initiative and used it to instigate the massacre of their political opposition. It is important to note that while it may not have been publicly known at the time, in 1966 McVey had participated in a far more detailed study of the situation with her fellow Cornell University professors Benedict Arnold and Frederick Bunnell.

¹ W.F. Wertheim, "Indonesia Before and After the Untung Coup," *Pacific Affairs* Vol. 39 (Spring-Summer 1966): 115.

² Ruth T. McVey, Preface to 1967 Edition of *Indonesia*, ed. Ruth T. McVey (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1967).

The analysis would not be published until 1971;³ however, on March 5th, 1966 the internally circulating paper was leaked by Joseph Kraft of The Washington Post. Soon to be known as the “Cornell Paper,” the document created an extremely important narrative prior to its official publication five years later, and thus, should be examined alongside academic work originating in the 1960’s and not those in the 1970’s when it was published.

The 162-page report is a detailed analysis of metropolitan and provincial press in Indonesia from September to December 1965, the differing political and social cultures of Central and Western Java, and a historic account of the internal tensions between the Diponegoro Division (the Seventh Division encompassing Central Java) of the Indonesian Army and the General Staff in Jakarta.

By focusing on “certain aspects of Indonesian politics which have been somewhat neglected,” the authors attempt to draw attention to the fact “that the history of the Army in particular has been marked by intermittent turmoil from the moment of its formation in 1945. The July 3, 1946 Affair, the 1948 Madiun Affair, the October 17, 1952 Affair, the June 27, 1955 Affair, the August 13, 1956 Affair, the abortive November 1956 coup, the military dissidence in the Outer Islands in 1957 and the PRRI-Permesta Rebellion of 1958 represent only the major crises.”⁴

After establishing an overall picture of turmoil and volatility within the Indonesian Army, the authors outline the historic disunity between Central and Western Java divisions, then goes into details of individual instances of power jockeying between the Diponegoro Division and General Staff in Jakarta.⁵ The fact that the military conspirators of the September 30th Movement were entirely comprised of Diponegoro men leads the authors to determine that their motivations stem directly from continued internal divisions within the Indonesian Army.⁶ Furthermore, the planning of the operation seems to coincide with Army battalions 454 and 530 of Central Java (the two battalions which seized Merdeka Square on October 1st) being in Jakarta as part of the National Day festivities scheduled to take place on October 5th, 1965, further indicating that it was Diponegoro men who planned *Gestapu*.⁷

After establishing that causation and implementation both link directly to the Diponegoro Division, the authors construct an argument of probable deniability for PKI involvement. Vastly outnumbered militarily, the movement relied on the support of Sukarno when being presented with the fait accompli at Halim Air Force Base. In order to ensure such support, the conspirators actively worked to incriminate the PKI both by kidnapping party leader Dipa Nusantara Aidit and involving PKI-affiliate organizations *Gerwani* and *Pemuda Rakjat*, who were training at Halim, in the execution of the generals. “Untung and his group were able to make every use of the PKI that they wished, without once allowing the PKI or its constituent units to comprehend what was going on.”⁸ The authors believe that the disorientation of the Communist Party and lack of unification behind the movement is proof that the party was not involved, pointing to instances such as the leftist newspapers *Ekonomi Nasional* and *Kebudayaan* reporting on October 1st the exact phrasing of Untung’s 7:00am radio address without providing any sort of editorialization or moral support which would have helped the movement succeed.⁹

The paper concludes that “the irony of October 1st is that in one night all the elaborate political maneuverings of the previous decade were reduced to meaninglessness in an action in which none of the major actors had any real comprehension.”¹⁰ The situation is compared to two Grandmasters playing a prolonged game of chess when an angry child runs up and kicks the board over. When the player which was winning (the PKI) wants to continue the match, the much more physically dominant player (the Army) decides that they should wrestle instead. The narrative of the “Cornell Paper” was widely circulated both within Indonesia and the Western academic world. However, numerous other depictions of events arose in the 1960’s opposing the narrative of a purely internal military affair.

³ Benedict Anderson and Ruth T. McVey, *A Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965 Coup in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1971).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 20-23.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 22, 42-42.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 119.

In 1967, Pulitzer Prize winning reporter John Hughes published his narrative using a combination of existing evidence and his personal interviews with *Gerwani* members in late 1966. Hughes admits that, like available documentary evidence, the interviews conducted under military supervision could have been skewed to enforce the existing narrative.¹¹ However, he ultimately concludes that the confessions of guilt he obtained from *Gerwani* members during these interviews were legitimate. Such a conclusion is ultimately tainted by Hughes' pre-existing opinions, stating several times that "Communists being Communists" always have plans to seize power through violence.¹²

Hughes concludes that "there is no question of course that the Indonesian Communist Party was up to its neck in the coup attempt,"¹³ and that the officers involved in the conspiracy were either "straight Communist" or ambitious opportunists eager to please a President who wanted obstructionist generals such as Yani and Nasution out of the way.¹⁴ Hughes may not be an accredited historian, but the combination of his prominence as a Pulitzer Prize winning author and anti-Communist sentiment in the West resulted in his narrative garnering much attention.

In 1968, the Central Intelligence Agency declassified a report providing the United States Government's stance on the September 30th Movement. The report mirrors Jakarta's official narrative; the PKI had planned and executed the plot, numerous signs indicate but do not prove that Sukarno was involved, and that Suharto was "the hero of the day."¹⁵ Throughout the report, it is emphasized that it is "established fact" that "the Indonesian coup [...] was in every respect the planning of the PKI."¹⁶ Whether the report was declassified to combat opposing narratives in academic circles, to help justify growing American support for the Suharto regime, or simply as standard protocol cannot be determined with certainty.

Whatever those reasons were, the CIA's declassified report was academically supported the following year when the University of California, Berkeley professor Guy J. Pauker published his account of the rise and fall of the Indonesian Communist Party. While Pauker is an acclaimed historian in many circles, it may be of importance to note that he was also a RAND consultant and as a result intellectually and financially connected to the CIA.

Pauker outlines the increasing militarism in comments made by Aidit both in public speeches and internal PKI documents following his September 1963 visit to Peking.¹⁷ This supporting evidence is tied to PKI member Sudisman's testimony during the Extraordinary Military Tribunal stating that the PKI Politburo had unanimously approved of a military operation against the Army's top generals on August 28th, 1965.¹⁸ Pauker ultimately concludes that it is "abundantly clear that the action against the six Army generals was initiated and planned by the chairman of the PKI, D.N. Aidit,"¹⁹ and that "Aidit was preparing his own offensive against the Army leadership before the rumors about a Council of Generals began to spread in late May 1965, which suggests that those rumors may have been actually initiated by him."²⁰

In the 1970's a new set of narratives would gradually emerge, adding new possibilities to the debate over whether the PKI or dissident junior-officers in the military masterminded *Gestapu*. The first of these narratives emerged in the *Journal of Contemporary Asia* when W.F. Wertheim, who had cautiously weighed the evidence just four years earlier, wrote a short article implicating Suharto as the mastermind being the September 30th Movement.²¹ Without any incriminating evidence, Wertheim outlines numerous pieces of circumstantial evidence indicating that Suharto was deeply involved in instigating the conspiracy. Wertheim outlines the intimate relationships shared between Suharto and numerous conspirators.

¹¹ John Hughes, *The End of Sukarno: A Coup That Misfired: A Purge That Ran Wild* (London: Angus & Robertson Ltd., 1967), 45-48.

¹² *Ibid.*, 83, 108.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, *Indonesia – 1965: The Coup That Backfired* (Washington: Central Intelligence Agency, 1968), 283, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/esau-40.pdf>.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 71, 266.

¹⁷ Guy J. Pauker, *The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Indonesia* (Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation, 1969), 28-42.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, VI.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

²¹ W.F. Wertheim, "Suharto and the Untung Coup – The Missing Link," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 1, Issue 2 (1970), 50-57.

Suharto was the top commander to Lieutenant Colonel Untung and Brigadier General Supardjo during Operation Trikora, the early 1960's campaign to seize Western New Guinea from the Dutch. Suharto forged strong enough bonds with his men to later attend Supardjo's wedding.²² Colonel Latief was Suharto's Staff Officer in charge of intelligence during the same campaign, a connection which raises questions as to why Latief was never put on trial following his arrest.²³ In addition to these connections, Wertheim asks why the commander of KOSTRAD (Suharto) was not placed on the list of generals to be abducted and why three sides of Merdeka Square were occupied by coup forces while the fourth, where KOSTRAD headquarters is located, was left untouched.²⁴

Wertheim concludes that Suharto not only holds "responsibility as the Army Commander for the massacre of hundreds of thousands" of Indonesians, but also "for the murder of the six generals."²⁵ Wertheim's narrative seems to have left an impression with scholars in the early 1970's. University of Bridgeport professor Justus M. van der Kroef stated in 1970 that "no serious student of *Gestapu* has denied that both the Indonesian Army and the PKI were involved in it.

The controversy, however, has focused on the degree of involvement of each."²⁶ The following year, van der Kroef concluded in his own study that both parties were equally responsible.²⁷ Aidit and Sjam had plotted on the PKI side with the remainder of the party having no knowledge of the conspiracy, while Untung and Supardjo masterminded the military's role with the remaining officers being nothing more than dupes. Despite holding such an opinion, van der Kroef couldn't help but to bring up the curious fact that "the commander of the Army's Strategic Reserve Forces (KOSTRAD) [...] had not been on the list of the Lubang Buaja assassins," and that contrary to Suharto's own testimony that "Indeed he was not at his Djakarta home on the night of the coup."²⁸

By the mid 1970's, scholars began to add the United States government to the list of possible conspirators of the September 30th Movement. In 1975, the University of California, Berkeley professor Peter Dale Scott directly attacked Pauker's 1969 assertion that "Communist China appears as the only foreign power which influenced indirectly the course of events."²⁹ Scott outlines the history of direct intervention in Indonesia culminating in the Outer Island Rebellion of 1958. The rebellion was instigated by the PSI and Masjumi political parties after receiving millions of dollars in American subsidies during the 1950's and were assisted by direct B-26 bomber support.³⁰ Following the embarrassments of Sukarno capturing a CAT pilot who crashed in Sumatra in 1958 and the Bay of Pigs incident in Cuba in 1961, the CIA shifted operations to a general strategy of plausible deniability as outlined by a 1960 Council on Foreign Relations blueprint and transitioned to the specific strategy of training right-wing militaries in economic and military operations in preparation for government takeovers as outlined by Guy J. Pauker of the RAND institute in 1958.³¹ Scott points to the increase in U.S. aid and officer training in the years prior to 1965 as proof that the Council on Foreign Relations and RAND advice was implemented in Indonesia. At a time when economic aid was cut off due to Sukarno's leftist policies and rhetoric, \$35.8 million in military aid was provided to Indonesia in four years between 1962 and 1965; an increase from \$29.5 million in military aid in the thirteen years prior. In addition, the number of Indonesian officers trained in America increased from 250 in 1958 to 500 in 1962 and 4,000 in 1962.³² At the same time, the Indonesian Army oil company *Permina* was provided huge contracts with American oil companies in order to funnel further aid to the Army. By 1963, Standard Oil of California and Texaco held 63% of all Indonesian oil contracts.³³

²² Ibid., 52.

²³ Ibid., 56.

²⁴ Ibid., 52.

²⁵ Ibid., 56.

²⁶ Justus M. van der Kroef, "Interpretations of the 1965 Indonesian Coup: A Review of the Literature," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Winter, 1970-1971): 557.

²⁷ Justus M. van der Kroef, *Indonesia After Sukarno* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1971).

²⁸ Ibid., 13.

²⁹ Pauker, *Rise and Fall of the Communist Party*, IV.

³⁰ Peter Dale Scott, "Exporting Military-Economic Development – America and the Overthrow of Sukarno 1965-67," in *Ten Years' Military Terror in Indonesia*, ed. Malcolm Caldwell (Nottingham: the Russel Press Ltd., 1975), 213.

³¹ Ibid., 215-218, 227-330.

³² Ibid., 235-236.

³³ Ibid., 225, 237-239.

While Scott is unable to provide any evidence of direct U.S. involvement in the September 30th Movement, he claims that “US involvement goes deeper” by fostering the environment necessary for the coup to occur through oil-funding of the Indonesian Army and the paradigm of Military-Economic development as officially pronounced by Lyndon B. Johnson on April 7th, 1965.³⁴

A proliferation of scholars would join Scott in the 1970’s questioning America’s involvement in *Gestapu*. Some, like Scott, focused on U.S. policies in the lead-up to 1965. Others, such as the Five Colleges professor Michael T. Klare, focused on the curious speed of U.S. recognition and assistance to the Suharto government following the events of 1965.³⁵ Numerous public figures would openly question America’s involvement, including Sukarno’s widow.³⁶

Ultimately, these inquiries would lead to no substantial evidence or new information on the subject during the remainder of the 1970’s and throughout the remainder of the century. Academics such as Harold Crouch continued to pour over existing archives of interrogations and trial manuscripts in an effort to fine-tune previous narratives.³⁷ Others, such as Brian May, would make frustrated proclamations such as “Whatever happened was almost certainly too bizarre for a Western mind to conceive.”³⁸ The reality of the situation by the mid-1970’s was that there simply was not enough information to properly sort out the convoluted events surrounding *Gestapu*,

May provides numerous causations for the lack of information, “not least is that scholars who have a vested interest in the subject are unwilling to risk being forbidden to enter Indonesia” after Cornell University’s Benedict Anderson and George McT Kahin were punished by Suharto’s government in such fashion in 1972 after pushing for unreleased documents pertaining to trials which were not made open to the public.³⁹ In 1990, Monash University professor Robert Cribb focused on outlining the difficulties in bringing new information to light. On an emotional basis, Cribb recognized that subjects revolving around “the killings are a topic of unusual sensitivity.”⁴⁰ There was also a safety issue to consider. “With the regime which oversaw and approved the killings still in power, those who have stories to tell against it are understandably reticent.”⁴¹ Cribb goes on to blame a lack of international moral outrage amidst the peak of the Cold War for discouraging a consolidated effort to push for outside investigations.⁴² It was simply easier for Western observers to state that a Communist coup resulted in Communists being killed. It is difficult to argue with Cribb’s morality based logic when reactions to the 1965 massacres in Indonesia often reflected *Time*’s proclamation that the mass murders were “The West’s best news in Asia.”⁴³ Bertrand Russell famously stated that “in four months, five times as many people died in Indonesia as in Vietnam in twelve years.”⁴⁴ Even the CIA admitted that “the anti-PKI massacres in Indonesia rank as one of the worst mass murders of the 20th century, along with the Soviet purges of the 1930’s, the Nazi mass murders during the Second World War, and the Maoist bloodbath of the early 1950’s. In this regard, the Indonesian coup is certainly one of the most significant events of the 20th century, far more significant than many other events that have received much more publicity.”⁴⁵ There have been three main exceptions to the dearth of information after the 1970’s about the events of 1965.

³⁴ Ibid., 247-248.

³⁵ Michael Klare, “Indonesia and the Nixon Doctrine,” in *Ten Years’ Military Terror in Indonesia*, ed. Malcolm Caldwell (Nottingham: the Russel Press Ltd., 1975), 265-274.

³⁶ R. S. Dewi Sukarno, “Sukarno’s Widow Writes to President Ford,” in *Ten Years’ Military Terror in Indonesia*, ed. Malcolm Caldwell (Nottingham: the Russel Press Ltd., 1975), 262-263.

³⁷ Harold Crouch, “Another Look at the Indonesia ‘Coup’,” in *Indonesia, No. 15*, ed. Benedict Anderson and Susan Hatch (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1973), 1-20.

³⁸ Brian May, *The Indonesian Tragedy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1978), 114.

³⁹ Ibid., 129.

⁴⁰ Robert Cribb, preface to *The Indonesian Killings*, ed. Robert Cribb (Clayton: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1990), xviii.

⁴¹ Robert Cribb, “Problems in the Historiography of the Killings in Indonesia,” in *The Indonesian Killings*, ed. Robert Cribb (Clayton: Center for Southeast Asia Studies, Monash University, 1990), 2.

⁴² Ibid., 5.

⁴³ “Vengeance with a Smile,” *Time Vol. 88, No. 3*, July 15, 1966, 26.

⁴⁴ Bertrand Russell, et al., *The Silent Slaughter: The Role of the United States in the Indonesian Massacre* (New York: Marzani & Munsell, 1968), 4.

⁴⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, *Indonesia – 1965*, 71.

The first came in 1990, when reporter Kathy Kadane published an article in several major newspapers outlining interviews she conducted with ex-CIA agents and American diplomats.⁴⁶ The report provides details of a joint effort between the U.S. State Department and the CIA to provide over 5,000 names of suspected Communists to the Suharto regime during the massacres in late 1965. The article goes on to describe the creation of the list, which began in 1963, prior to the 1965 coup. The revelation serves to prove American complicity in the atrocities in 1965-66, and also serves to further indicate a degree of American involvement in the events leading up to the massacres.

In an interesting side-note, The State Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia released a 225-page report in 1995 presenting the official Indonesian Government *Gestapu* narrative,⁴⁷ although the document certainly was not the third piece of new information alluded to in the above paragraphs. The report merely puts a government stamp on the story presented through the military controlled media in the final months of 1965. The timing of the report remains rather curious.

The release of the document 30 years after the events of the September 30th Movement may have been in response to the controversy caused by Kadane's reports, or it may have been an attempt to re-ingrain legitimacy by a government in Jakarta which felt its grip on power loosening. The exact reasoning behind the release may never be known. What is known is that ten years after Kadane's article, an unsanitized Editorial Note in the 1964-1968 volume of the Foreign Relations of the United States was included in error, effectively confirmed her claims.

The document outlines U.S. Ambassador Marshall Green's confirmation that "a sanitized [i.e. Embassy attribution removed] version of the lists in A-398 has been made available to the Indonesian Government last December [1965] and is apparently being used by Indonesian security authorities who seem to lack even the simplest overt information on PKI leadership at the time (lists of other officials in the PKI affiliates, Partindo and Baperki were also provided to GOI officials at their request)."⁴⁸ The State Department initially attempted to recall the publication, but digital copies had already been made, resulting in the knowledge remaining in the public domain.

The third instance of new information regarding *Gestapu*, and by far the most substantial, came in 2006 when the University of British Columbia professor John Roosa published two new primary sources on the event.⁴⁹ The backbone of Roosa's study relies on an analysis of the abortive coup written by Supardjo entitled "Some Factors that Influenced the Defeat of the September 30th Movement as Viewed from a Military Perspective."⁵⁰ The document was part of a massive archive released during the Extraordinary Military Trials following the arrest of the conspirators and was simply overlooked by analysts, which Roosa believes may have been due to the prosecution not using it during Supardjo's trial. Roosa describes the document as "the most important primary source on the movement. It is the only document that has surfaced to date that was written by a participant in the movement before his arrest."⁵¹

Supardjo was not a core conspirator of the movement, nor was he privy to underlying logic behind decisions being made as he did not become a member of the movement until arriving in Jakarta several days before it transpired. However, his account sheds light on several previously unanswered questions, including who was to blame. According to Supardjo, the movement was a co-conspiracy planned throughout the month of September by Aidit, Sjam, and Pono on the PKI end, and Latief, Untung, and Soejono on the military end, without any single person or group taking a dominant position of leadership.⁵² "Untung and his fellow officers left political matters up to the party while they focused on the narrow goal of plotting the abductions."⁵³ The lack of clear leadership caused confusion and an inability to act quickly as Suharto's counter-coup began to unfold. It also caused confusion in the academic world while trying to piece together what transpired afterwards.

⁴⁶ Kathy Kadane, "Ex-agents Say CIA Compiled Death Lists for Indonesians: After 25 Years, Americans Speak of Their Role in Exterminating Communist Party," *Herald-Journal*, May 19, 1990. <http://www.namebase.net/kadane.html>.

⁴⁷ State Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, *The September 30th Movement: The Attempted Coup by the Indonesian Communist Party* (Jakarta: State Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 1995).

⁴⁸ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XXVI, eds. Edward C. Keefer and David S. Patterson (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2001), Document 185.

⁴⁹ John Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup d'Etat in Indonesia* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 89.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 224.

As Roosa puts it, “the failing of most earlier investigations of the movement was their starting point: the assumption that there must have been a mastermind behind it. I am suggesting that there was no central mind.”⁵⁴ Supardjo’s recollection of the events at Halim Air Force Base also provide insight into Sukarno’s role in the movement, as he was the sole communicator between the President and the other conspirators. Roosa determines that the movement “presented him (Sukarno) with a fait accompli, and then allowed him to take whatever further action he so desired. Supardjo did not dictate terms to Sukarno.”⁵⁵ While it is certainly possible that Sukarno could have found out about the plans of the September 30th Movement beforehand, the Supardjo document clearly exonerates him as playing any role in the conspiracy prior to arriving at Halim on the morning of October 1st.

The second new source presented by Roosa is an interview, conducted by himself, with a top member of the PKI who wished to remain anonymous and is referred to as “Hasan”. Having to rely solely on Roosa’s word about the source is disconcerting; however, a number of memoirs, unpublished documents, and interviews with other PKI members are presented to substantiate Hasan’s claims. The main importance of the source is to act as confirmation of Sjam and Sudisman’s previous testimonies at the Extraordinaire Military Trials, which claim that only several members at the top of the PKI hierarchy had any knowledge of the September 30th Movement.⁵⁶

However, “for Suharto the identity of the movement’s real organizers was immaterial.”⁵⁷ Roosa is careful not to add conjecture regarding any possible role Suharto may have had in the movement itself, but ultimately concludes that “Suharto’s creeping coup d’etat against Sukarno had worked so well because the army had already drawn up a plan.”⁵⁸ *Gestapu* was used as a pretext for Suharto to commit mass murder of his political rivals then use the legitimacy acquired from the anti-PKI campaign to move against Sukarno.⁵⁹

The narrative presented by Roosa is by far the most conclusive depiction presented to date and seems to have been accepted by the academic community. One of the most in-depth studies of the 1965-68 massacres in Indonesia, published by Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor in 2012, cites Roosa’s narrative of the September 30th Movement while calling the official story coming out of Washington and Jakarta “fabricated stories,” “blatant lies,” and “propaganda inciting civilians to exact revenge.”⁶⁰

There are still a number of questions yet to be answered about *Gestapu*, particularly those revolving around Suharto and the U.S. Government’s knowledge of or participation in the conspiracy prior to October 1st, 1965. It is important to note that Indonesia’s democracy is still only two decades old and the election of Joko Widodo in 2014 placed the first civilian with no clear ties to Suharto into the Presidential office. There remains a fragile balance between civilian and military power in Indonesia while the intimate military alliance between Jakarta and Washington has continued into the 21st century. It is uncertain how long it will take for all the mysteries revolving around the September 30th Movement to be solved. What is certain is that the unblinking eyes of historians will continue to watch for more information pertaining to the events in Jakarta in 1965 to arise in the future.

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⁵⁴ Ibid., 204.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 106.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 142-145.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 224.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 200.

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