

**Witness Denied:  
the Australian Response to the Indonesian holocaust,  
1965-66**

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*“It is too much to hope that the new Indonesian regime will be logical; our best hope is that it will be practical.”*

Editorial, “Testing the winds”,  
*The Age*,  
April 14, 1966

*The media are the vigilant guardians protecting privilege from the threat of public understanding.*

Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, 1989

## **1. Introduction**

The burden of my argument begins from the observation that there is a curious gap in Australia's understanding of contemporary Indonesia. While there is widespread awareness in Australia of the Nazi genocide against the Jews, of the murder of millions of Soviet citizens by Stalin's regime, of the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia, of the widespread atrocities that accompanied the American invasion of Vietnam and of the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, there is remarkably little public knowledge<sup>1</sup> in Australia of a comparable genocide: the murder of upwards of 500,000 Indonesian citizens by their own army and by civilians at the instigation and with the blessing of the army in late 1965 and early 1966.

The killings in the months after October 1965 were the foundation of Suharto's ensuing three decades of power, and in a sense, the foundation of “post-Vietnam” Southeast Asia. They were certainly the pre-condition for subsequent Australian (and US, and Japanese) support for the New Order. The killings can be regarded as the *constitutive terror* of the New Order state.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the three decades of Suharto's New Order, these events were literally unspeakable: as if, in Germany, the Nazi crimes could not have been publicly discussed even in 1980. With the passing of Suharto there was some small shift, but essentially the mass trauma remains repressed. Until that trauma is directly and openly addressed, then much in the subjective life of Indonesian politics will remain literally explosive.

However, my topic is not the killings themselves, but rather the smaller and less central issue of one aspect of the foreign response and understandings of the killings: contemporary Australian representations of the killings. This paper does not discuss, except for occasional references, the most important topic, namely the place of the killings themselves within Indonesian history. Nor does it seriously examine the question

of the still unclear but apparent role of the Australian government of the day in the events that lead to the killings.<sup>3</sup>

My starting point is the fact that in Australia - the country next door to Indonesia - there is very little awareness of these killings. Anecdotal evidence suggests that very few people other than those with a close interest in Indonesian affairs have any knowledge of these killings. While public opinion polls in Australia often show a widespread negative images of Indonesia, this is largely derived from perceptions of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor and subsequent events.

It is clear that this general Australian ignorance of the Indonesian holocaust half a century later is not a matter of forgetting something once known. My anecdotal sense of widespread ignorance in Australia amongst people of roughly my own age was confirmed by an excellent contemporary assessment of just what ordinary Australians thought about the early days of New Order Indonesia. The political sociologist Rod Tiffen carried out a well designed public opinion survey in the early 1970s in Melbourne. Almost 60% of the sample did know who Suharto was, and most approved of him and Indonesia under his rule. In their account of Suharto's rise to power, most of these knowledgeable referred to the coup - as Tiffen remarks, "the best remembered aspect of contemporary Indonesia". Yet, as Tiffen noted, "*not one person referred to the post-coup massacres.*"<sup>4</sup>

To my surprise, this work on the Australian response to the killings has grown into a long and complex work, in its own small way as shocking and morally challenging to me as the still almost unbelievable killings themselves, which to this day remain a matter of traumatic silence in Indonesia itself.

How can this apparent amnesia of genocide<sup>5</sup> in one of the countries nearest Australia be explained? My title, "Witness Denied" is intentionally ambiguous. I want to argue that Australian journalists, academics, politicians and community leaders in fact knew very well what was happening in Indonesia, but did nothing, and said nothing, about it. They saw, but denied what they saw. Moreover, they failed signally in the elementary moral duty of any of us after Auschwitz: to bear witness to truth. Documenting and explaining this historical blindness is the objective of this paper

### ***Biography of a paper***

I fear I need to ask the reader's indulgence to explain why a project that began in the late 1980s, and was largely complete by 2000, is only properly seeing the light of day now. This involved more than the usual academic sins of tardiness and avoidance of completing a project due to the ever-diminishing returns of searching for "just one more piece of information and then I'll be done".

This project began, in my mind, in the mid-1980s. The real impetus to this study was anecdotal, and distressing. At that time it became clear to me that however high their general level of political awareness, very few Australians with whom I spoke (Indonesian specialists apart) had more than the haziest knowledge of the killings of 1965-66, and most simply knew nothing at all.

Approached to comment on aspects of Australian-Indonesian relations in early 1990s, I said I found it shaming to see the prime minister of my country warmly admiring a mass murderer.<sup>6</sup> At this point, while some disagreed with this harsh assessment of President Suharto's record, the most common response was, "Oh, do you mean East Timor?" When I then explained that this was not what I meant, the response was very often a confession of complete ignorance - amongst people from whom you would expect something else - or else reluctant acknowledgement that indeed, they did remember something about some killings of communists, but it was all rather unclear.

I heard this pattern of apparent amnesia so often that I started to ask the question to myself: where would people have gained their information about the killings of hundreds of thousands of Indonesians in the half year or so following the coup of October 1st, 1965? What information was available in the Australian media at the time? What kind of public response was there to whatever information that was available?

The work began following the lead of Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman in their groundbreaking comparison of the western media treatment of the Khmer Rouge killings in Cambodia and the first years of the Indonesian colonization of East Timor.<sup>7</sup> To my surprise, this work on the Australian response to the killings has grown into a long and complex work, in its own small way as shocking and morally challenging to me as the still almost unbelievable killings themselves, which to this day remain a matter of traumatic silence in Indonesia itself.

However, the work became still more complex. At first, this involved extending beyond the initial study of the Australia media coverage of the 1965-66 killings to a series of interviews with former journalists in Australia and the United States, the better to understand the conditions under which they wrote at that time. Then it made sense to compare the media coverage in Australia at that time with contemporary coverage in the United States and Japan. This resulted in another systematic content analysis, and another set of interviews.

While all the time resisting the temptation to plunge into the more important field of the involvement of Australia's government and intelligence agencies in the events of September 1965, it was clear that making sense of the media coverage required a wider survey of representations of the killings in the smaller but influential Australian "little magazines" of the right and the left at the time, and public comment in the parliament and other places by politicians and well-known commentators. This led to another round of media surveying and interviews with writers and key political figures in Australia at the time.

That last round of study of the little magazines resulted in the discovery in late 1995 of a long forgotten short article in the Australian magazine *The Nation* written by Herbert Feith in March 1966. Since I will be spending considerable time talking about this article in due course, I will just say now that discovering the article was a great shock, since it presented a side of Herb Feith unknown to me and most people - a side much closer to

liberal anti-communism than could sit comfortably with the warm friend of Indonesian dissidents, the courageous defender of East Timorese right to self-determination, the spirited advocate of peace research, and the explorer of cultural critique with Ivan Illich. As a former student of Herb's, and a close friend for almost all my adult life, the discovery was a profound shock. Over the next two years Herb and I had a series of difficult but rewarding long talks about *The Nation* article, and about what it meant in his life. He read what I was writing, and we came, I believe, to a position where both of us were satisfied that it was accurate, if not comfortable. Over the next few years we occasionally talked about these matters, but my life had been overtaken once again by political and academic work on East Timor, and that was the subject of many of our conversations.

Herb's sudden death in November 2001 hit me, as well as many others, very hard.<sup>8</sup> More to the point here, it meant that was then no question of publishing a work that included on a sharp criticism of his actions in 1966, however he may have approved of my representation of them. I simply put the matter aside, with my life not lacking in other demands.

In the meantime, different versions of the large manuscript from which this paper is drawn have been in circulation in the small world of Indonesian studies in Australia, and amongst journalists and media studies academics. A very short version appeared in *Inside Indonesia* in 2002<sup>9</sup>, and several colleagues have published references to the longer study, itself unpublished. Indeed, more than one academic article has been based on unacknowledged access to this unpublished work. And in the meantime other researchers have picked up some of my questions and pursued their own approaches.<sup>10</sup>

At several points along this crabwise path I gave public talks and university seminars on aspects of it. Two such events at Monash University in Melbourne gave rise to responses that were highly emotional and varied from the deeply grateful – and relieved that these matters were being discussed - to deeply hostile and critical both of the work and of me personally.<sup>11</sup> A Kyoto University presentation in 1998 introduced me to the work of Saskia Wieringa on the politicization of gender under the New Order, and her work on the domestic Indonesian media portrayal of Gerwani.<sup>12</sup>

At a small but intense seminar at Sydney University, what was to become a familiar pattern became clear: the paper, whatever its faults, led to an intensely autobiographical introspection from Australian participants who had known Indonesia at that time.<sup>13</sup> As a result, this paper gives rise to what must seem like an inordinately long list of people I want to acknowledge – including some who were angered by it but still responded thoughtfully. I am grateful for all the varied but heartfelt and considered responses. I am also grateful to the organisers of this conference for the opportunity to at least begin to bring the material into a more proper ordering, as well as for the chance to participate in the reflections on the topic of the conference.<sup>14</sup>

## **2. Australian newspaper coverage of the Indonesian killings**

Consequently, my first research question became a simple empirical one: if most Australian citizens in the mid-1960s formed their opinion of Indonesia on the basis of information in the mass media, exactly what information about the killings in Indonesia was provided by the mainstream media of the time? In 1960s Australia, radio was important (see below, section 4), but newspapers were the most important source of information on foreign politics, and newspapers at that time were for the most part regional rather than national in character. Accordingly, readers in one part of Australia would normally only have access to information provided by two or three daily papers published in the capital city of their state.

Taking the case of Melbourne, the second largest and at the time wealthiest Australian city, I examined all issues of the daily morning newspapers, the tabloid *Sun News-Pictorial* and the “quality broadsheet” *The Age*, which together dominated the Melbourne market.<sup>15</sup> Both newspapers were searched for the period October 1, 1965 – August 30<sup>th</sup>, 1966, looking for articles about Indonesian politics, and then, amongst that set, articles that in any way mentioned the killings of suspected communists<sup>16</sup>.

Indonesia was big news in 1965 and 1966; as big a story in terms of coverage as the Vietnam War which was developing side by side on the front pages. At no other time in the following forty five years, with the brief exceptions of the invasion of East Timor and the events of 1999 in that country, would Australian newspapers pay so much attention to Indonesian affairs. In the eight months from November 1965, *The Sun*, a tabloid known condescendingly by those who did not read it as “the people's paper”, published 175 stories on Indonesian affairs: an average of 21 per month, or almost one for every day the paper published. Moreover, one-quarter of these stories were either on the front page of the paper, or on pages two or three. The great bulk of the stories appeared in the first six pages, which, in *The Sun's* tabloid form, made for a great impact. *The Age* had an even greater Indonesian coverage: in the same period there were 282 articles dealing with Indonesian politics alone: an average of 35 articles a month.

Not only was Indonesian politics reported on frequently, both papers invested heavily in talent and resources for their coverage. *The Age* and *The Sun* drew many of their reports from the Australian Associated Press wire service reports from Jakarta, or, as appropriate, Singapore or Bangkok. In the period in question *The Age* had a full-time senior Southeast Asia correspondent based in Singapore, Creighton Burns, whose reports from either Singapore or Jakarta frequently dealt with Indonesian politics.<sup>17</sup> *The Sun* was using Frank Palmos as a staff writer in Jakarta from late 1964, giving him bylines by November 1965, and upgrading him to “Our Man in Jakarta” in early 1966.<sup>18</sup> Both Burns and Palmos were heavily featured and their stories promoted by their editors, with the Indonesian-speaking Palmos repeatedly filing heavily publicized interviews with Sukarno, Subandrio and Malik.<sup>19</sup> The Singapore-based Burns, while visiting Jakarta regularly, did not speak Indonesian, and relied much more on embassy sources.

### **The Sun News-Pictorial: many stories, minimal coverage of the killings**

In the first month after the coup, *The Sun* concentrated on the Army assault on the PKI: articles in October 1965 regularly reported a “purge”, or a “war on Reds” or an “anti-Red

call". In late October and early November Central Java was reported to be in a "state of civil war" according to Army sources, and on October 30 "the Communist reign of terror" in central Java was reported to have spread to Indonesian Borneo".<sup>20</sup>

In the following month there were a number of reports of clashes between the Army and the PKI in the context of "Reds control big area in Java".<sup>21</sup> The deaths of a number of people at the hands of Communist combat units were reported in the same period.

Over the period of the killings from October 1965 to June 1966, *The Sun News-Pictorial* published 175 articles on Indonesian politics. Yet despite these almost daily major reports on Indonesia, *The Sun* published only five articles that even mentioned the killings in the year following the coup. Not until August of 1966 would *The Sun* publish a report containing more than three sentences mentioning the killings.

The first report of killings of communists appeared in *The Sun* on November 1st, when AAP reported that 8 Communists were killed "when they tried to ambush an Army patrol at Teras".<sup>22</sup>

A week later Australian Associated Press (AAP) reported that 40 paratroopers died after eating food poisoned by communists in "Tjilatjar" [sic]. In reprisal "Communist laborers were taken from a fertilizer plant in the city and machine-gunned on the beach at the Tjilatjar Gulf". The brief story went on to report that in Surabarta [sic], Central Java, "a suicide squad of nine women from the Communist women's organization (Gerwani) were killed when they blocked army tanks in the street." The story of the Gerwani suicide squad, apparently unarmed, continued: "Paratroops cut them down when they jeered and refused to leave after warning shots were fired."<sup>23</sup>

From November 1965 until the end of June the following year (the end of the survey period), *The Sun* published more than a hundred articles on the Indonesian crisis, only four of which included reports of killings of Indonesian Communists. Yet the characteristics of these few reports were highly significant.

November 30: At the end of November, the death of the PKI Secretary-General, D.N.Aidit, was reported.<sup>24</sup>

January 17: President Sukarno was reported as "claiming" that a fact-finding mission had reported to him that some 87,000 Indonesians had been killed following the coup.<sup>25</sup> While this was a front-page report, the vocabulary and context made it clear that it was not thought necessary to pursue the truth of the matter - it was another "claim" from an unreliable source.

January 24: A week after this broadcast, Sukarno was reported as referring to "many reports of Communists and others being killed in the big Javanese resettlement camps in South Sumatra".<sup>26</sup>



Once again, there was no assessment of the President's claim or follow-up. It was not even deemed necessary to demonstrate the falsity of Sukarno's claim: the prevailing discourse allowed *The Sun* to successfully imply that the radical nationalist leader of an Asian country was a source of unreliable veracity.

*Wilkie: "It's children's hour in Jakarta", March 9, 1966*

March 9: In an article titled "Now it's children's hour in Jakarta", *The Sun's* veteran political commentator Douglas Wilkie took up the activities of the anti-Sukarnoist students who had just stormed Foreign Minister Subandrio's office. "There's something to be said", wrote Wilkie, "for university students who are ready to riot in a good cause, but "the more responsible Army leaders aren't happy about the way the students are taking control". Towards the end of the column Wilkie then confided

"Many of the students are tools of the Moslem extremists who butchered some 300,000 of their Communist countrymen with kris and club after the September 30 revolt."

Wilkie hurried on to explain, "this was in contrast to the Army's relatively humane mopping-up operations".<sup>27</sup>

The tone and placement of Wilkie's remark are telling, conveying a sense that this is old news, a matter that readers already know about, not something worthy of comment, other than to make the link to the present concern with rioting students. There are neither moral concerns worth comment, nor further matters of fact that may need stating or investigation. In March 1966, the columnist is referring to the mass killings in a way that suggests they are common knowledge already. He does not need to explain them to his readers. But the information certainly did not come from his own newspaper.

Moreover, the reference to killings by "kris and club" and "Moslem extremists" is characteristic of contemporary Australian (and US) references to the killings and to Indonesian politics as a whole. "Indonesia" is very much "the Other", characterized by immaturity ("It's children's hour in Jakarta"), unknowable and irrational causation ("Moslem extremists"), with connotations of racially informed separateness (Indonesians kill with "kris and club", unlike rational westerners).

In sum: amidst the almost daily reports from Jakarta in *The Sun* in the survey period, the only information that came to readers of *The Sun* about the killings of Communists by the Army and Islamic groups for ten months following the coup totaled just a few sentences in five articles: two small reports of very small numbers of PKI killed in November; two passing and dismissively phrased reports of Sukarno's discounted claim of 87,000 in January; and Wilkie's authoritative two sentences of what is presented as old news: 300,000 Communists killed by Islamic groups, and an unknown number more "mopped-up humanely" by the Army. None of this is at any time thought worthy of further investigation or even comment.

*Palmos: "So Indonesia counts its dead", 5 August 1966*

Finally, in early August 1966, with Sukarno tamed and when the flow of daily news from Jakarta was beginning to run down to a trickle, *The Sun* did turn to the massacres. It published a powerful and detailed report from Frank Palmos in Jakarta, which put the number who died at "more than one million".<sup>28</sup>

Palmos based his article on "a composite report from more than 100 trained researchers, put into the field last November", with the individual results collated by military staff in Jakarta. Graduates from "the Bandoeng and Jakarta Universities" carried out the research, completing their work in Central and East Java in July 1966. "At least 800,000" were killed in these provinces alone, where the killing was in continuing. Palmos summarized the main points of the report as:

"At least 800,000 were killed in the area investigated.  
In the PKI "triangle stronghold" of Bojolali, Klaten and Solo, nearly ONE-THIRD of the population is dead or missing.  
Farther east, in the 12-mile radius of Kediri, killing was 'abnormally high'.  
'Startling tolls' took place in the residency of Banjumas, geographical centre of Java."

Palmos continued:

"Researchers added these points, believed to be contained in the various detailed but uncollated reports:

'Most of the killing was by militant youth groups, often appointed by military or village authorities. Youths were armed and encouraged by these "authorities", and in the "triangle" area, were given drill and weapons training. Once the killing started, the youths were uncontrollable. Scores of champion killers were found. One boy interviewed killed 135, then "lost count". Beheading was the most common form of killing, but for large scale executions shooting was normal. Killing was invariably late at night, far away from villages where the victims lived. Although thousands of women were killed, "almost none" were raped or abused before being put to death.'

Palmos' article was accompanied by "a report on the killings from a young army officer, who was stationed in the Banjumas residency, Central Java", which spoke in horrifying detail of the nightly beheadings of truckloads of communists by gangs of Moslem young men in a state of "semi-amok".

The actual source on which Palmos based his report is now lost, together with virtually all of Palmos' Indonesian papers, which burned in a warehouse fire following his return to Australia.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the power and gravity of Palmos' August 1966 report, there were no follow-ups, no commentaries, and no editorials. Daily news reports in the following months made no

reference to the killings. Had you not read the paper the day of Paltos' single detailed report in August, or the day of Wilkie's remark in passing in March, it is very likely that even a diligent reader of *The Sun* would have known nothing of the Indonesian genocide taking place as he or she read.<sup>30</sup>

In sum then, the largest newspaper in Melbourne barely mentioned the killings in the ten months while the killings were in full sway, and then allowed a single detailed report to be published. The limited information that did appear represented Indonesians as irrational and unknowable racial others. There were no follow-up articles after Paltos' August report<sup>31</sup>. Thereafter, *The Sun News-Pictorial* was silent on the holocaust next door.

### **The Age: seeing and not seeing**

*The Age*, was at the time, Melbourne's "quality paper", an establishment broadsheet with a smaller circulation than the tabloid mass circulation *Sun*. As might be expected, *The Age* published even more articles on Indonesian affairs than did *The Sun*: 282 articles dealing with Indonesian politics alone in the eight months from October 1965, and many more on other Indonesian-related topics.<sup>32</sup>

In late October and November, *The Age*, like *The Sun*, which shared the same AAP wire service, carried a number of reports mentioning the killing of small numbers of communists by the army or by rioting mobs in the uncertain days after the coup. On November 1st, as in *The Sun*, 8 communists were reported killed when they attempted to ambush a Government patrol.<sup>33</sup> A week earlier, President Sukarno was reported as calling for an end to "racialism, slander and vengeance", an "obvious reference not only to the anti-Communist campaign but to mob activities against Chinese".<sup>34</sup> Seven Communists were reported in fighting with Army troops in central Java on November 20th.<sup>35</sup> Just before Christmas, *The Age* ran a front page story on "100,000 Communists held since coup", but reporting no deaths of prisoners or others.<sup>36</sup> Where "terror" was mentioned around this time, it was attributed to "Communist terrorists" who "had mounted a reign of murder, arson, kidnapping and robbery" in central Java.<sup>37</sup>

Until the end of December 1965, the pattern of reporting in *The Age* was similar to that of *The Sun*. From that point, however, a difference emerged. President Sukarno's speech reporting 87,000 killed since October 1 was the leading story in the paper in an AAP report of the monitoring of Sukarno's Bogor broadcast from Singapore. The paper reported that Sukarno said the information had been collated by "a Government mission that had completed surveys of Central and west Java, Bali and Sumatra". "Monitors said he lowered his voice and spoke almost in a whisper as he gave the figures - the first announcement of the death toll".<sup>38</sup> In contrast to *The Sun*, *The Age* reported Sukarno in an uncompromised way, without textual connotations of falsity.

### **Spiking Robert Macklin: "The killings go on ....", January 20, 1966**

In January 1966 (in other words relatively early in the period of the killings) *The Age* published the first of its three major articles on the killings: a detailed eye-witness account of the killings by one of its own reporters, Robert Macklin.<sup>39</sup> In 500 words

Macklin provided a graphic and convincing account of mass murder that could have left no reader in doubt of the seriousness of what was happening in Indonesia.

“The Killings Go On....Troubled Times in Indonesia” opened with an anguished account of Macklin and his wife witnessing a public killing in Denpasar:

“The man's screaming and the gathering of a large crowd of school children from a nearby playing field attracted us to the army headquarters post. A Communist was being interrogated in Denpasar, the capital of Bali, Indonesia, on the ground floor verandah. We stood silently with the children as the man was bashed and dragged away. The children returned to their soccer and volley-ball and the passers-by resumed their normal routine. The man was one of many thousands of Communists who have been killed in Indonesia since the attempted coup on October 1, last year.”

After discussing varying estimates of the numbers killed, ranging from 10,000 (an Australian journalist in Jakarta) to 300,000 (an American missionary travelling extensively), Macklin gave a vivid picture of the reality behind much-used journalists' phrases like “the crunching of the PKI”:

“We do not know how many Communists were killed but it is plain that Communism as a political force in Indonesia is at least temporarily finished. The way of its going was a brutal one. We saw four villages where every adult male had been killed. We saw trucks of villagers returning to the hills after making trips to the compound where they were given a ration of Communists to kill. We saw mass graves in each of which up to 10 Communist men and women had been packed after being stabbed to death. We saw literally hundreds of houses which had been burned to the ground.”

Anyone who read Macklin's searing 500-word account of his personal witness would have had no doubt as to what was occurring in Indonesia, and would have been unable to avoid the moral implications of the gathering holocaust. Yet it is doubtful that many people read Macklin's piece, since it was buried in the later parts of the paper's finance section, next to the prices from the cattle yards.

There was no reference to his eyewitness report in other parts of that edition of *The Age*, nor was it ever, to Macklin's knowledge, referred to by any other writer in any of the hundreds of articles the paper published on Indonesia in *The Age* that year. As far as I am aware no other Australian journalist published a contemporary eyewitness account of the killings, nor wrote an account with anything like Macklin's direct experience.

In journalistic terms, this is an apparent paradox. Macklin - and *The Age* - had a world scoop. Yet the article was published deep in the newspaper. There was no follow-up by either by Macklin, or the paper's Southeast Asian correspondent. For Macklin, the lack of follow-up and the paper's lack of interest in the story was, he told me,

“a bit surprising. Though there was nothing I could do: I was back in Australia. In fact I was shocked when it got such a poor run. I didn't know what to put it down to at the time. I suppose I put it down to the strife in the company, which was terrible at the time.”<sup>40</sup>

Macklin himself wondered at the time whether the story had been effectively spiked by senior managers of *The Age* who he knew even then to have close relationships with the Australian security and intelligence world. His criticisms of his old newspaper are gently put, but seriously meant. But there is no doubt that what he saw as a young man in Bali in January 1966 has stayed with him. *The Age* editor of the time, Keith Sinclair, was well known amongst his staff as being close to the Liberal government, and to the Department of Defence and the security organizations, as was *The Age* Canberra correspondent John Bennett. In fact, Macklin had been approached by the Australian Security Intelligence Service [ASIS], responsible for overseas intelligence operations. Prior to setting out from Jakarta, Macklin had met with the Australian ambassador in Jakarta, K.C.O. “Mick” Shann, who had sent him off to East Java and Bali. Shann was himself a major player in the 1960s Australian intelligence scene. At Sinclair's request, Macklin agreed to meet with “the security folk” to be debriefed about his Indonesian tour. While Macklin himself on balance declines to blame the fate of his scoop on the influence of Australian intelligence organizations, it seems at the very least a reasonable hypothesis.<sup>41</sup>

This spiking of the most important contemporary eye-witness account of the Indonesian holocaust by an Australian would seem to have been one of those occasions when a respectable newspaper demonstrates its understanding of the fact that a commitment to national security overrides mere reportorial responsibility - even (or especially) in the case of holocaust.

A month after Macklin's story was allowed to wither next to the cattle market reports *The Age* made its only editorial comment on the mass murders in the country closest to Australia: a single sentence in passing, saying “the army has conducted a mass slaughter of Communists and their sympathizers”.<sup>42</sup>

**Sulzberger: “A Nation Amok”, April 14, 1966**

*The Age* published two further feature articles on the killings in 1966, but neither was from an Australian source: both were edited reprints from the *New York Times*. The first, from the *New York Times* chief foreign correspondent, C.L. Sulzberger, was headed “Mass murders go on in Indonesia”, and appeared on April 14th.<sup>43</sup>

Not only was Sulzberger no radical, but in 1977 Carl Bernstein revealed that Sulzberger had a secret relationship with the CIA. Sulzberger signed “some kind of release” (Sulzberger's words to Harrison Salisbury) by which he would act as a conduit for CIA information, but pledged never to reveal its CIA origins.<sup>44</sup>

Sulzberger first set the tone from the night of September 30,

“when specially trained squads of women slashed some of the officers while they were still alive. ... Almost immediately Moslem youth organisations, many of whose members had been persecuted by the PKI, started to hunt down communist suspects, exterminating them, their wives and their children.”

Sulzberger made it clear that the still ongoing Indonesian murders amounted to “one of history's most vicious massacres”, rivalling in scale and savagery

“Turkey's Armenian massacres, Stalin's starvation of the Kulaks, Hitler's Jewish genocide, the Moslem-Hindu killings following India's partition, the enormous purges after China's Communisation.”

“More people”, Sulzberger wrote, “have been slaughtered during the past six months than in the entire Vietnam war”.

Having established in powerful terms the historical equivalence of the Indonesian holocaust with other twentieth centuries mass killings of unarguable moral importance, Sulzberger then reviewed the range of killings from Java to Nusa Tenggara, describing killings by religious mobs, and killings by the army, of men, women and children, often in the most horrible manner, including mass starvation.<sup>45</sup> Decapitation, Sulzberger suggested, was

“favoured because Indonesian animist tradition claims that if an enemy's head and body are buried apart his spirit cannot return... Recently a traveller was told of a bullock cart loaded with human heads.”

This resort to cultural explanation of the manner of mass murder ignored the direct role of the army and its guns and bayonets in much of the country, but it was compatible with Sulzberger's underlying civilizational assumptions. As he put it, “the killing attained a volume impressive even in violent Asia where life is cheap”.<sup>46</sup> This fitted with the explanation that Sulzberger offered for the causes of “this grisly cataclysm” characterized by “such intense bestiality”.

Mentioning briefly the desire for revenge after the killings and reported mutilation of the generals, relief at the avoidance of an apparently inevitable communist political victory, and “the spirit of Moslem jihad”, Sulzberger stayed with the imagery of the exotic east:

“Indonesians are gentle and instinctively polite, but hidden behind their smiles, is that strange Malay streak, that inner, frenzied bloodlust which has given to other languages one of the few Malay words, “amok”. This time an entire nation ran amok.”

Of course, while this was tempting in so far as it matched the savagery of the reports Sulzberger provided, and tried to match the scale of his horror, the “nation gone amok” thesis owed more to western racial fantasies about a hypostatized “east” than to historical reality. Perhaps the dead ran amok en masse on their way to the pits, but there is no

suggestion to that effect in other reports. Perhaps Suharto and Nasution and Sarwo Edhie were slavering at the mouth as they gave the orders to “sweep”, but it is implausible. Perhaps the thousands of army privates and n.c.o.'s who mainly carried out the actual shooting and bayoneting of the lines of men and women were filled by an “inner, frenzied bloodlust”, but it is unlikely.

The killings of communists carried out by civilian groups, principally rural Islamic youth groups, were for the most part instigated by and encouraged by the army, where they were not actually directly organized by local army commanders. To be sure, there were many instances of Islamic mob violence, spontaneous and incited. On occasion, killings were carried out in an extreme psychological state - as much to overcome the natural human repulsion amongst the killers against cold blooded slaughter that military training usually suppresses by other means. But the killings by civilian groups went on over many months, in many different parts of the archipelago, and in many cases appeared to be a matter of carrying out a plan, or working through the names on a list.

Despite the popularity of the amok thesis, Cribb could find little or not evidence to support it.<sup>47</sup> By and large, it is much more likely that the bulk of the killing was just a job of work to many of the army murderers, and a matter of cooler satisfaction to their calculating leaders.

#### Seymour Topping: “the mass killings still go on”, 24 August 1966

The second major *New York Times* article on the killings republished in *The Age*, titled “Indonesia haunted by mass killing” by Seymour Topping, appeared on August 24th.<sup>48</sup> Once again, this was an edited version of a much longer story from a *New York Times* correspondent, in this case Seymour Topping, the chief of the Times’ Hong Kong bureau (and later managing editor).<sup>49</sup> This long story from Topping was the third in a series of four front page articles that Topping wrote after a month-long visit to Indonesia in mid-1966.<sup>50</sup>

Topping applied for an Indonesian visa almost immediately after the coup, and for some time was moving backwards and forwards between Hong Kong and Indonesia. At first he wrote short pieces, published fairly quickly, but concentrated on preparing the long series, which were only published after he left Indonesia.<sup>51</sup>

The opening sentence of Topping’s piece set his tone – the army and its allies had carried out a mass slaughter of communists, and there would in time be a vengeance to come.

“From the terraced ricefields of central Java to the exquisite island of Bali, from the rubber plantations of Sumatra to the fishing villages of remote Timor, the Indonesian people are troubled by the heritage of violence bequeathed their society by the staggering mass slaughter of communists.”

By the third paragraph Topping was providing Australian readers with information that only the Communist Party paper *The Guardian* had offered to that point:

“No one will ever know how many scores or hundreds of thousands of members of the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), their sympathizers, families and falsely accused persons died in retaliation for the abortive communist-supported bid for greater power in Djakarta on September 30. The best-informed sources estimate from 150,000 to 400,000, but they concede that the total could be far more than half a million. The killings still go on in some places.”

In contrast to the evasions of *The Age's* Southeast Asia correspondent, Topping made clear who was killing who:

“This reporter found on a tour of the former principal centres of communist political influence that executions were usually carried out by the military in central Java, while the population in east Java and Bali were incited by the army to do most of the killing. The military executed communists by shooting, but the population was left to do its killing in other ways often with ritual forms of extreme cruelty.”

Topping quoted Major-General Sumitro, “the tough military commander of East Java”, who said in an interview

“that Suharto had issued a detailed order in mid-November that the PKI should be destroyed ‘structurally and ideologically’. He said staff officers visited area commanders in early December to see if instructions had been understood and executed. Sumitro said, ‘Most local commanders did their utmost to kill as many cadres of the PKI as possible’.”

Topping ranged over Java and Bali, and described regional variations in the pattern of the killings. He said he had no real consultation with the *Times* head office about tackling the story: he just informed them as a matter of course: “I just did what I thought was necessary to cover the story.” Asked about the intensity of the impact of the story of the killings, Topping replied that “I wasn't thinking consciously in those terms, of the morality or the politics. I was just intent upon covering the story in great detail, and explaining what was happening and why.” The Indonesian politicians he interviewed were affected too: “they had a political point of view as well - to eradicate communist influence and so on - but they were deeply shocked too.”

When it was suggested to him in an interview that some Australian journalists had claimed it was difficult to travel outside Jakarta, Topping retorted that this was simply untrue. It wasn't easy to get information, but it could be done. Granted, he said, the *Times* was unusual among US newspapers in its resources and coverage of foreign affairs, but it was possible to travel about: it was clear the story had to be told from outside Jakarta.<sup>52</sup>

### **3. Australian radio coverage**

For Australians in the mid-1960s, radio was an important source of information. News reporting on radio was more substantial than later decades, particularly on the Australian



Broadcasting Commission stations. Commentary on the ABC “serious” radio network (subsequently Radio National; e.g. 3AR in Victoria) was the province of established male academics and senior journalists with an authoritative air.<sup>53</sup> John Legge recalls broadcasting “Notes on the News” radio talks on the unfolding events in Indonesia at the time, along Herb Feith and Jamie Mackie.<sup>54</sup>

Unfortunately no records of the content of ABC radio news or commentary is available. This lack of data is frustrating, because there is clear evidence that at least some part of what was broadcast by the ABC to Indonesia on Radio Australia in the period after the coup was disturbing to the Australian Department of External Affairs. Moreover, the Department worked systematically to ensure that Radio Australia coverage of events in Indonesia conformed to its guidelines. Remarkably, at the height of the killings, the Indonesian Army requested the assistance of the department to ensure Radio Australia reported on Indonesian politics in the Army’s preferred manner.

The role of the Department of External Affairs in attempting to control the content of Radio Australia coverage of Indonesian politics has been well documented in the years following the public access to previously secret Australian government papers released under the “30-year rule”, in particular detail by Karim Najjarine and Drew Cottle.<sup>55</sup>

Najjarine and Cottle document a series of cables and memos by the Australian ambassador in Indonesia, Keith (“Mick”) Shann; the Acting Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, Gordon Jockel; the First Assistant Secretary, D.O. Hay; Richard Woolcott, then Public Affairs Officer for the department; and the Minister for External Affairs, Paul Hasluck.

Immediately after the coup, Shann recommended that the department encourage Radio Australia to emphasize the following points (Najjarine and Cottle’s paraphrasing):

- “1. That reports of PKI involvement and Communist Chinese complicity in the coup be given prominent coverage whilst being careful not to directly accuse them.
2. That reports of divisions within the army specifically and armed services more generally be played down or simply not reported.
3. In the period immediately following the coup, Sukarno’s loss of authority should not be reported, but the possibility of his retaining power should be downplayed.
4. The complete neutrality and non-involvement of Australia in the events unfolding in Indonesia.”<sup>56</sup>

On October 10, Shann cabled the Department to advise that Radio Australia “should do nothing to engender sympathy” for President Sukarno”.<sup>57</sup>

When there were indications that the Radio Australia coverage from Jakarta was not following the Department’s line sufficiently closely, the Secretary of the Department

indicated that it possessed sufficient influence within the ABC hierarchy to rectify the matter. On October 15, 1965, Jockel wrote to Shann:

“You might let me know personally whether there are any problems with the ABC representative in Jakarta. Here again, I think we can, if necessary, steer Radio Australia in the right course even if the ABC man in Jakarta is not entirely with us.”<sup>58</sup>

There are also indications that the Department exercised considerable influence on newspaper editors at the time. In a memorandum to Jockel in October or November 1965, Richard Woolcott reported that

“we are now in a position to influence the content of leaders in practically all major metropolitan newspapers.”<sup>59</sup>

Three days after Jockel’s request to Shann, Hay wrote to the Minister for Information, suggesting that Radio Australia

“should, by careful selection of its news items, not do anything that would be helpful to the PKI, and should highlight reports tending to discredit the PKI and show its involvement in the losing cause of the 30<sup>th</sup> September movement.”<sup>60</sup>

The most remarkable (and also indicative of Radio Australia’s perceived influence in Indonesia) of Shann’s recommendations in the effort to control Radio Australia was the way in which in March 1966 he recommended adopting a set of requests concerning Radio Australia passed on to him from the Indonesian Army. In general, the Army asked that “we should not concentrate on them too much”. The Army also requested, in Najjarine and Cottle’s paraphrase,

- “That the Army not be portrayed as acting alone against the PKI but with the cooperation and support from youth groups, both Christian and Moslem.
- That RA suggest that, over the years, at least some people on the anti-communist anti-Sukarno side of Indonesian politics had had some limited success.
- RA should not describe the Army as “Western” or “rightist”.”

Shann concluded his cablegram to External Affairs by remarking “I can live with most of this, even if we have to be a bit dishonest for a while”.<sup>61</sup>

#### **4. Intellectuals and the “Little Magazines”**

One of the curious truths of Australian cultural history is that the “little magazines” – the literary and political quarterlies and monthlies – have had an influence quite out of proportion to their tiny circulation figures. *Quadrant*, *Dissent* and *The Nation* all published articles in 1966 dealing with the great sea change in Indonesian politics, and at least touching on the question of the killings.

### ***The academics: the regretful sigh of liberal anti-communism***

Creighton Burns' predecessor as *The Age's* Southeast Asia correspondent was Bruce Grant who in 1964 published the first edition of his best-selling book *Indonesia*.<sup>62</sup> In this book Grant established himself as Australia's foremost popular interpreter of contemporary Indonesia, resulting in the publication of a second Melbourne University Press (MUP) edition two years later, with Penguin Books reprinting that edition in turn. Indeed, thirty two years after the publication of the first edition, MUP published another edition of Grant's *Indonesia*.

At the time of the coup and during the period of the killings, Grant was away from *The Age*, teaching in the Melbourne University Political Science Department.<sup>63</sup> In April 1966, Grant undertook a brief trip to Jakarta on behalf of Amnesty International to inquire into the situation of the thirty-odd political prisoners still held for their opposition to Guided Democracy, the most prominent being Mochtar Lubis. His recollection thirty years later was that before the trip he knew little or nothing of the scale of the killings. That changed with a chance meeting with his old friend Stanley Karnow of the *Los Angeles Times*. Clearly there were matters of human rights even more urgent than the fate of Sukarno's prisoners, but his teaching and Amnesty responsibilities did not allow him to pursue the matter. And besides, by then, “Vietnam was the story”.<sup>64</sup>

On his return, while Grant was kept busy by teaching, he managed to revise the text of *Indonesia* for republication by Penguin Books, but was only able to achieve passing reference to the army's genocide.<sup>65</sup> However in late 1966 Grant published a telling interview titled “The Mood in Jakarta” in the small Melbourne magazine *Dissent*.<sup>66</sup> The core of the article was an interview with a man he identified only as G.:

“a small, gentle Javanese who became, with the changes in government in March and July 1966, one of the most influential men out of the public eye in Djakarta.”

In response to Grant's expression of foreign shock about the killings, G.'s reply set out the basic defence offered by liberal anti-communists in Indonesia and beyond, then and later:

“Yes, of course, I'm not surprised. It was not, however, such a shock to us, although even now we do not know the extent of the magnitude of it. .... But the charge that gave this thing its dimension of horror - and meant many innocent people were chopped up - was fear, fear that the government had lost control and it was ‘them or us’. It was not pleasant. But I hope now that it is over and I don't think I have to apologize to you for it, any more than I would expect a Frenchman to apologize to me for the Terror, or an Indian or a Pakistani for the race riots

after partition or a Chinese for the elimination of landlords. I could not prevent it. It has given some of us the opportunity to see that nothing like it happens again.”<sup>67</sup>

As an expression of the mood in one part of Jakarta, the interview with G. is revealing. It tells us a great deal about the ability of liberal anti-communists in Jakarta to numb their reactions to the killings, and to rationalize the mass murders from which they were themselves beneficiaries. It is not clear just who “G.” was in reality, but it is likely that it was someone well known to Australian liberals with Indonesian connections - someone of the character and standing of Soedjatmoko, Selosoemardjan or Ganis Harsono.<sup>68</sup> Grant allowed the interview to stand on its own, offering no comment then, or at later stage. Grant moved back to *The Age* in 1967, and wrote frequently on Indonesia in the years to come, but never turned to the theme of the killings.

### ***Black hole anti-communism: James McAuley and Quadrant***

The most visceral and ideologically-driven response to the killings from Australian intellectuals came from James McAuley, the co-editor (with Donald Horne) of the anti-communist magazine *Quadrant*. McAuley was a poet with a long involvement in the affairs of colonial administration in New Guinea. After a dramatic and highly public conversion from the Sydney libertarian push to what was even for the times a highly conservative stream of Catholicism. But MacAuley still told a friend at the time “I want to have my hand in the current of history.”<sup>69</sup>

McAuley's piece provides evidence, amongst other things, of the intensity of Australian interest in matters Southeast Asian at the time - but it is an interest firmly anchored in the transnational framework of Cold War anti-communist cooperation.<sup>70</sup> McAuley's article took the form of a report following his visit to Jakarta in March 1966, en route to a *Quadrant*-organized conference in Kuala Lumpur, returning via Saigon: hence the title of the article: “Three Kinds of Trouble”.<sup>71</sup>

Most of the Jakarta portion of the article reveals McAuley's contempt for Sukarnoist Indonesia, marked by the “charisma of evil clowns” and political repression:

“The charisma of evil clowns is a political phenomenon of our time which deserves more study. Among living examples, Soekarno stands supreme in the charm, durability and skill he exhibits in bringing his rich and beautiful country into sordid wretchedness....Soekarno's Indonesia is indeed the goblok [stupid], standing almost completely isolated, having destroyed its political, economic, and cultural communications with the human race by submitting to the cantrips of the evil sorcerer. ... It is a strange, ambiguous shadow-world, in which repression is incomplete, inconsistent, full of holes, but also of perils.”<sup>72</sup>

There was little to disagree with here: his attack on the lack of press freedom should and could have been written at any time in the preceding five years. At the time of writing, Mochtar Lubis and some 30 other prisoners of Sukarno were still in prison, mainly for alleged crimes of lese-majeste. Perhaps McAuley's limited knowledge of Indonesian political history meant that he did not know that after the end of the nationalist

revolution, there had been no executions for political crimes. Yet what is horrifying is the blandness and willful blindness of the description that followed of the situation three or four months after the October coup:

“The coup and its aftermath had resulted in a strange stalemate at the time of my visit. From such a fluid and ambiguous situation anything can arise, and I shall not speculate upon possibilities that are likely to have changed by the time this is published. What can be discussed, though not definitively, is the real meaning of the September 30 coup.”

And that is the only reference to the genocide which was not only ongoing at the time, but which McAuley's informants in Jakarta could not have but spoken of. McAuley finishes by referring back to the title of Mochtar Lubis's best known novel in English, *Twilight in Jakarta*:

“[T]hat is the title of the novel by Mochtar Lubis, who is still in gaol. Whether the twilight will usher in the dawn, or deepen into night, is more than I can tell.”

For so many, as McAuley slept in Jakarta, night had already come forever, in the most brutal way. But it was only the difficulties of anti-communists that moved this Catholic ideologist to his desk.

McAuley's highly energized and moralized opposition was not just to communism but also, as he put it in the first issue of *Quadrant*, those “rhetorical humanisms, academic positivisms, and progressive illuminisms (whose frightening heir and fulfillment Communism is)” that “speak and gibber in the streets”.<sup>73</sup> He epitomized what Joel Kovel has described as “black hole anticommunism”<sup>74</sup>:

“Viewed against this diabolical force, all moral and rational comparisons disappear, like light sucked in by the virtually infinite gravity of a cosmological black hole. And so I shall call this peculiar property of anticommunism, which causes all distinctions to be melted in the heat of its ideological furnace, the black hole effect.”<sup>75</sup>

***Glezer's response to “a superior almost racist air coupled with unstated ideological satisfaction”***

The editor of *Dissent*, Leon Glezer, wrote a fierce reply to McAuley's *Quadrant* piece and to the denial of witness to the Indonesian genocide, in a short editorial stands as by far the most moving and powerful contemporary statement by any Australian on the killings.<sup>76</sup> Glezer identified the key forms of evasion I have noted already:

“The political killings of between a quarter and a half a million Indonesians received considerable coverage in the Australian press.<sup>77</sup> Yet the editorial comments, when these were made, were muted and were usually digressions from the main concerns of the comments. One sensed a superior, almost racist air in the discussions coupled with unstated ideological satisfaction. Hardly anyone

bothered to question. Even fewer protested. The standard argument, used in Indonesia and transferred in fuzzier terms here was the hoary one of - 'if we hadn't done it to them they would have done it to us'. This was accepted as if it was the most natural of justifications. Ideology worked nicely to allow a graceful acceptance of a double-standard morality.”

McAuley, well known as a Catholic moralist and a stern critic of communism as the devil’s work (in literal terms), provides the most bitter example for Glezer:

“Yet his comment on the Indonesian scene after the coup is appalling. McAuley hints at the massacres once. ‘The coup and its bloody aftermath has resulted in a strange stalemate at the time of my visit.’ After that the killings are ignored... Did McAuley have no doubts about the killings? Did he accept them as necessary, or inevitable or did he simply approve of them? The uneasy impression from his piece is the latter.”

Glezer's conclusion is inescapable: it seems that McAuley not only cared nothing for the murders of Communists, but accepted them as the necessary if possibly regrettable cost of political transformation.

### ***Rex Mortimer and the Australian Communist Party press: The Guardian***

In 1966 the Communist Party of Australia was no longer a significant political force compared to two decades earlier, but neither was it negligible. It was particularly important in trade union circles, and in its networks overlapping with the peace movement and churches. The party published the weekly newspaper *The Guardian* in Melbourne. From October 7, 1966 onwards, *The Guardian* published a number of articles in its international section on the coup and the attacks on communists and unionists. On November 11, it published “‘Hands off SOBSI’ say Australian unionists”, reporting statements by the large Amalgamated Engineering Union, and by the Communist Party of Australia (CPA).<sup>78</sup> The CPA November statement said

“Not only millions of communists in Indonesia, but also trade unionists and other progressive and democratic people are at present suffering from armed violence, intimidation and political bans by the top Indonesian Army leaders.”

The CPA’s strong statement of concern was especially significant at the time in the world of Australian socialists and communists because the leadership of the party had been highly critical of the “pro-Peking” line of the PKI in the preceding years, while the Australian party was beginning to move away from alignment with either Moscow or Beijing. The statement continued:

“In recent times there have been differences of views between the Communist Parties of Australia and Indonesia. We have always recognized, however, the heroic and constructive role of the PKI in the victory of the Indonesian people.’

By March 1966, the Seamen's Union held at least one stop work meeting to protest the violence towards Indonesian unions, and in particular the imminent execution of SOBSI leader Njono.<sup>79</sup>

In late April, *The Guardian* ran its first and most important story on the scale of the killings, based on the account published in the *Los Angeles Times* by its correspondent Robert Elegant.<sup>80</sup> Coming two weeks after *The Age's* publication of Sulzberger's "A nation amok", the report of Elegant's story addressed that matter directly:

"Elegant repeatedly underlines the responsibility of the Army leaders for the massacre: 'The nation did not, however run amok', he writes. 'The army almost always, was in control – in most cases compelling civilians to murder.' ... He writes again: 'The world still knows little of the extent or exact nature of the massacre which was, at the very least, stage-managed by the anti-communist Indonesian Army'."

A number of articles published in *The Guardian* on the situation in Indonesia carried the byline of Rex Mortimer, then a journalist and member of the CPA's Central Committee. Mortimer had visited Indonesia in the second half of 1964, as part of a CPA and journalists' union delegation. The visit made a deep impression on Mortimer, though at the time he was concerned about a hollowness in the party's political position, and scepticism about the leadership.<sup>81</sup> Mortimer subsequently made contact with Herb Feith, and went on several years later to write the PhD dissertation with Feith (and John Legge) that became the masterly *Indonesian Communism Under Sukarno: Ideology and Politics, 1959-1965*.

However in 1965 Mortimer was writing as a party politician and sometime journalist. The language and analysis in *The Guardian* articles, and in a longer 1967 analytical piece in a CPA journal, show a hackneyed apparatchik style that Mortimer subsequently completely shed in writing the doctoral thesis under Feith:

"It was the failure of the PKI to develop class-conscious policies and a disciplined party with an independent standpoint that contributed heavily to its debacle last year. Decisively influenced by the Chinese Communist Party line of subordinating struggles to solve internal problems to "first eliminating imperialism from the world", it allowed Sukarno and his nationalist entourage to divert the Indonesian revolution into sterile paths of anti-imperialist posturing, strident nationalism and prestige-building symbols, while the economy collapsed, the army and bureaucrat capitalist built up their power, and social discontent became frustrated and disillusioned."<sup>82</sup>

The April 28 article finished by quoting the most prominent left political figure in the country at the time, the Labor parliamentarian (and subsequently Deputy Prime Minister), Jim Cairns:

“As Dr. J.F.Cairns M.H.R. has pointed out, not a word of protest about this has come from the government and newspapers claiming to be outraged over defensive action by the ‘Viet-Cong’ in South Vietnam. On the contrary, satisfaction is the keynote of most comments from most sources, just as it was when Hitler and Himmler were on the rampage.”

### ***The torments of liberalism: the case of Herb Feith***

One crucial article appeared in the liberal fortnightly *The Nation* in February 1966: “The Killings in Indonesia: To moralize or analyze?” by one of the most prominent of Australian Indonesian specialists of the time, Herbert Feith.<sup>83</sup>

When I spoke with Leon Glezer, I asked him who he thought had made important contributions to the Australian understanding of the killings at the time, and who had protested most vigorously. Through the hazy memories of thirty years, Glezer replied, “Oh, Herb, for sure. Herb Feith, probably in *Nation*”.<sup>84</sup> For those who knew Herb Feith in the last thirty years of his life, the answer is obvious. No Australian academic dealing with Indonesia spoke out so consistently for the rights of those violated by the New Order state, whether in Timor or Jakarta, whether Islamic or communist or East Timorese nationalist. At considerable cost to his career and standing with the men of power, Feith raised issues of peace and the need to match economic development with human dignity in Indonesia and Australia alike. No-one else so guided several generations of students in both countries, although, perhaps to his credit, he founded no “school” with the diverse students who came to study with him.<sup>85</sup>

Thirty years later, Feith was to deeply regret the article in *The Nation*, feeling that he had misrepresented himself, and allowed incorrect conclusions to be drawn as to his real opinions. Yet, it arguably marked a turning point in Feith's career and in his approach to Indonesia, precisely because it quite accurately represented an unresolved dualism in his own thinking about Indonesian politics.<sup>86</sup>

Feith's approach to the killings, which were continuing unabated at the time, was in the form of a debate between two academics, “A” and “B”, with clearly identifiable and opposed emotional and political perspectives. After some brief discussion about the numbers of dead, the positions become clear by dialogue. A. is “hot”, greatly concerned about the moral dimensions of the killings; B. is distinctly cool in style, the *realpolitik* analyst incarnate. A. is generous to Sukarno, especially over his record of limiting violence towards his opponents, while B. is hostile to Sukarnoism and the claims of radical nationalism.<sup>87</sup>

A. leads off by emphasizing the scale of the killings, and the lack of moral response in Australia and elsewhere:

“A: To my knowledge the world has seen nothing as big since the early years of communist power in China. And what does anyone in this neighbouring state of ours say? Those who are not openly gleeful – ‘The Indonesian communists got



what was coming to them' - shake their heads – 'It's a bloody business, but life is cheap in those countries, I guess'."

B. is prone to remarks that have the effect of diminishing the impact of the killings, normalizing the extreme:

"B: Oh, it's bloodshed on a fearsome scale, all right. But let us not get the thing out of proportion... The stakes have always been high in Indonesian politics, and so have the penalties for losing.... [A]ll I am saying is that there is no particular reason to be shocked by all this."

B. not only rationalizes the killings, but coolly approves:

"B: Granted the size and power of the enemy they were trying to crush, their methods don't seem to me to have been unduly severe. .... I put it to you that killing Central Committee members was not just vengeance but principally a concern for the stabilisation of the army's position...That would not be too hard to understand."

When A. replies that the killing was not nearly as selective as that suggests, and that the army allowed Islamic groups too much of a free rein, B. explains the Army's practical difficulties in organizing properly controlled slaughter:

"B: ...the army could not have stopped it if it had tried... It would be too much to expect that they would stop this kind of thing altogether. . . Presumably they wanted to have some of the steam let off, but they did not allow the steam to pour out for too long."

Invoking the image of Sukarnoist "irrationality" and "unsteadiness", B. avers that the army leaders, are "men of steady hand and cautious style", with "short sharp actions, ruthless certainly, but by no means orgiastic".

A. and B. argue about the explanation of the coup, and the degree of complicity of the PKI and different sections of the armed forces, but B. moves the discussion to his main analytical - and moral - point:

"B: What strikes me about the whole story is the inexorability of it, the necessity of violence on a large scale. There is no doubt in my mind that there would have been killing on at least the same scale if the PKI had come out on top."

Astoundingly, A. replies "Agreed", and then somewhat limply goes on to "hope that neither of us would have hesitated to protest against it".

This was - and remains - a common defence of the killings, within Indonesia and elsewhere, especially amongst those who lived through the extreme anxieties of Jakarta life in the period 1963-1965. The moral evasions of this position shared by A. and B. - as

opposed to any counter-factual guesses about alternative paths of history - is revealed if the comparison is made with Nazi assertions about the threat to Aryans by Jews and Bolsheviks in the Germany of the 1930s as an explanation of the ensuing genocide. Not surprisingly, Feith's close friends from Cornell, Ruth McVey and Ben Anderson, were furious with him when they read the dialogue, making precisely that point, with McVey writing a passionately angry poem on the matter.<sup>88</sup>

Let me elaborate this point, since it is important, and easily misunderstood. It is quite true that there were in the 1963-1965 period widespread fears amongst non-communist Indonesians that should the PKI come to power many would lose their lives in a "Communist bloodbath". The hot-house of Jakarta politics in that period, the anxieties of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary politics in East Java as the PKI attempted to unilaterally enforce land reform law, and the effects of black propaganda and disinformation from the Army and the PKI and foreign sources, all would have contributed to a willingness to believe in such a possibility in certain people. As a consequence, warranted or not, based in reality or not, fears of a planned Communist bloodbath were certainly one psychological cause of subsequent anti-communist violence and atrocity. Yet acknowledging this is very different from accepting claims of a planned Communist bloodbath as an ex post facto moral justification for the murder of Communists in their hundreds of thousands. The elementary bad faith such a claim involves is compounded when no evidence is offered, when the historically demonstrated military weakness of the PKI is ignored, when the role of Army black propaganda inciting the Communist slaughter following the coup is ignored, and when the consequences of the claim are ignored.

To return to the dialogue, where B is by this point completely dominant in the debate, B. then moved to his metatheme, the tragedy of history as manifest in the events of 1965, and the ubiquity of irony:

"B: To my mind this whole thing is not so much horrible as tragic. It is tragic that Nasution as a practical vigorous moderniser and excellent organiser and the sort of leader Indonesia needs should have to kill Aidit, who was another vigorous moderniser and the sort of leader Indonesia needs...But this sort of irony is not uncommon in politics."

B. and A. here share in a well nigh perfect expression in a local sphere of Max Weber's sense of the tragedy of modern society: the horrors can be seen, yet not avoided. Irony abounds. A. never attacks B.'s superbly articulated combination of Weberian tragedy and realpolitik anti-communism, because he shares the same framework. The virtue for B. is that "at least now the situation has been resolved", and economic development can proceed without the obstacle of the PKI.

A. again replies lamely, suggesting that perhaps the army will now find it unnecessary to reform itself, with the spectre of wider military corruption unchecked by the PKI. B. is not sure of this, but returns powerfully to his theme of tragedy and the powerlessness of the witnesses of history as a rationalization for the silence of intellectuals:

“B: But one thing on which I feel strongly is that outsiders ... at this point should not be criticising the Indonesian army. I don't think that your protesting would have any effect, but if it did it would be helping to destroy what remains of the hope to which October gave rise.”<sup>89</sup>

Again A. concedes on the crucial issue of the consequences of tragic understanding: “I suppose you are right”. B. then moves to crush A.'s need to protest for humanity, by returning to the need to accept the tragic view of political life:

“B: [T]he fact is that collective murder is no particularly unusual thing in this world, neither the military variety nor the political. The Indonesian killings are profoundly tragic, but no more so than a great many other developments elsewhere.”

B.'s conclusion allows for A.'s pointless private conscience, but demands a return to the iron cage of analysis without aim:

“B: Cry out in anguish to God if you will, but if you are talking to the public use the opportunity to clarify the whole thing and explain it. Understanding a big event like this is worth more than being indignant about it.”

To which A. concludes with faint responsibility, “Maybe it is to the living, but not to the dead.”

This is an extraordinary debate in which the two proponents articulate two quite clear and widely held positions, yet what is striking about these positions is the commonalities rather than the differences. The sub-title of the report of the debate - “to moralize or analyze”<sup>90</sup> - summarizes their disagreement, and equally reveals the common assumption that the moral and the analytical are distinct and separable activities. A. never attacks B.'s clearly articulated combination of Weberian tragedy and *realpolitik* anti-communism, because he shares the same framework. A. never asks what the purpose of B.'s analysis might be. There is a disabling quality that comes from the *realpolitik* shared by the two participants in the dialogue. Though one of the partners is more concerned to address moral issues than the other - who is more immediately “realist” - it is the realism that prevails.

Analysis and morality (labeled “moralizing”) are explicitly and radically separated. In the end, it becomes unclear as to why it is so important to understand, since understanding seems to lead to the imperative of accepting the tragic and ironic character of the events. A. never presents any positive alternative to the acceptance of tragedy and irony, any view of praxis that would seek to move further: outrage and analysis are left isolated and opposed.

The end of the dialogue seems to lead the reader with weary resignation to acceptance that nothing is to be done, though perhaps with a bad conscience. In practical terms, this

an acceptance of what used to be called technocratic reason. Linking understanding to transformation - the idea of active witness - is left abandoned.

Commenting on the preceding paragraph, Feith wrote to me:

“Yes, this...is right. And it highlights what I now most regret about the dialogue. I didn't intend to leave readers to conclude that I sided with B. I certainly didn't intend to leave readers thinking that nothing could be done.”<sup>91</sup>

It was very difficult to imagine Herb Feith writing anything of the kind in the years following the invasion of East Timor. This was one of the first dialogues Feith wrote - a form he used to great effect to clarify ambiguity and uncertainty, and to encourage reconciliation between apparently opposing points of view. The dialogue form was used a great deal in theological circles in the 1950s and 1960s, including the Student Christian Movement with which Herb Feith was closely involved. Its usefulness for revealing the essence of difference of approach, and in some circumstances in encouraging reconciliation, is clear. However, as the present example shows, it can also freeze the movement to realization of the essence of conflicts, and as here, prevent the realization of the unexpressed underlying limits of discourse.<sup>92</sup>

Here the dialogue expresses at least two sides of Feith's responses to the coup and the killings. The full range of inner response of anyone who had been so fully engaged, on a personal and intimate basis with a great many of the greater and lesser actors of Indonesian politics through the 1950s and 1960s, can only be guessed at. Formally the dialogue expresses, with painful clarity, the implications of two strands of Feith's makeup at the time: as he put it himself, the moralist and the analyst. Their shared Weberian assumptions mean that there really is no dialogue, no move to reconciliation. Of necessity, analysis - in the particular form of realpolitik - wins out.<sup>93</sup> Knowing full well what it meant in human terms, it must have been a tormenting conclusion.

To that point, Feith had been known as the most acute observer of Indonesian politics in Australia. Peter Hastings summarized the contemporary regard for his work to that point by describing *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia* as “the single most brilliant work of political science by an Australian”.<sup>94</sup> *The Decline*, published in 1962, had been followed a year later by the *Dynamics of Guided Democracy*, as well as two major articles in prestigious US academic journals.<sup>95</sup> Not only did these publications mark Feith out as an analyst of erudition and political judgment, but they indicated that he was a leader in Australia of the new American-bred school of non-Marxist (and by more than presumption, anti-communist) Political Science. Feith's institutionalist concerns always kept him at a distance from the simplicities and enthusiasms of modernization theory, publishing in *World Politics* published by Princeton University indicated his acceptability to that by then dominant school of political theorizing about “political development”.<sup>96</sup> But publishing in the Berkeley journal then edited by Robert Scalapino, *Asian Survey*, indicated Feith's acceptability to the New Mandarins, as Noam Chomsky was to dub them a few years later - the American anti-communist specialists on Asia who were to have so much influence in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.<sup>97</sup>

The analytical power of these seminal works on Indonesian politics in the fifteen years after the end of the independence struggle made “The Killings in Indonesia” more significant - and poignant. After all, while the moralist is left to private grief by the bullying, victorious analyst, an important challenge to the priority of “analysis” had been mounted. And, while the transition was not a sudden one, the urge and confidence to publish such analyses of Indonesian politics appeared to diminish in Feith's writings in the years after 1965-66. Analysis, at least so radically separated from the values of authentic transformation, never quite held its charms for Feith again. “The Killings”, in many and undoubtedly painful ways, may be seen as a mark of torment, containing at least the beginning of a radical change of heart, a change of life.

Feith was never an outspoken anti-communist, though certainly not, to that point, a person of the left in any sense.<sup>98</sup> While his personal friendships were widespread in Indonesia, none of his writings, then or later, expressed a great interest in or admiration for the communist stream in Indonesian politics - or indeed, for any one person in that stream.

In fact, Feith has several times told me of his profound feelings of admiration for the PKI Politburo member Sudisman, when he saw him on trial for his life in Jakarta in 1967. Together with Ben Anderson, Angus McIntyre and David Mitchell, Feith attended the last day of the trial, and found himself “absolutely awestruck” by Sudisman's dignity and intelligence.<sup>99</sup> Ben Anderson has given a moving account of his own response to Sudisman in the introduction to his translation of Sudisman's defence speech: *Analysis of Responsibility*, as well as in other places.<sup>100</sup> But what was striking for a man whose political analysis was always based at root on judgments of individuals he worked hard to understand was the simple fact that he just did not know many people in the large world of Indonesian communism.

“I have often tried to reconstruct the matter of how much friendly personal contact I had had with Communists and pro-Communists in those years. Apparently very little, though I went to the party bookshop periodically and was repeatedly impressed by the friendly efficiency of the young people who served me there. I had more contact of that kind in 61-65, including two beautiful sessions with Njoto. A. was my main source for left perspectives in those years and in 64 he introduced me to our mutual friend [the communist student leader Hardoyo], whom I met again in 80 or 81.<sup>101</sup> And I heard positive things about the movement from various fellow academics, including David Penny, Don Hindley, and Ruth [McVey].”<sup>102</sup>

In “The Killings in Indonesia”, the significant anti-communist moment comes when A concurs, without quibble or disagreement as to the implications, with B's assertion of inevitability. To quote B. once again:

“What strikes me about the whole story is the inexorability of it, the necessity of violence on a large scale. There is no doubt in my mind that there would have been killing on at least the same scale if the PKI had come out on top.”

In the first sentence, the killings, and the historical processes leading to them, have been rendered nature-like: there can be no argument with geology. The second sentence provides the crucial moral escape clause from having to take seriously the genocide orchestrated by the “men of steady hand and cautious style”. There is no challenge - either at the overt level of posited counter-factual statements about the paths of contemporary history, or about the moral meaning of supporting the winning side both positively and by agreeing to silence one's doubts. There is a sundering of humanity here: both of the shared humanity of communists and their opponents, and the inner humanity by the participants of the dialogue.<sup>103</sup>

The dialogue in fact revealed more than its author intended, and of course reflected a much wider discourse. The central question of the inevitability of the killings had a particular source for the group of Australian analysts he was closest to:

“We were all somewhat disactivated by Soedjatmoko... Maybe it was the failings of liberalism. But there was a sense that it was all terrible, but that it was over and done with. A choice had had to be made, it had happened, and now the best thing was to work with the existing arrangements and do the best thing we could about basic human rights issues. Rather like the first response to Timor.”<sup>104</sup>

In December 1966, Feith returned to Indonesia, and visited communist prisoners in one of the many camps.<sup>105</sup> The experience was shattering, especially followed by the experience of the Sudisman trial. In the decade following 1965, a great deal changed for Feith, as well as for the community of Australians concerned about Indonesia. There is both a biographical break and a broader historical one. It was impossible, as I have already said, to imagine Herb Feith writing a dialogue with similar assumptions in the twenty years following the invasion of East Timor. The capacity for critical analysis was unchanged, but rarely articulated so effectively about Indonesia itself. When it did emerge again in public again, it was more equivocal, and permanently wedded to a broader and more articulated sense of responsibility for the transformative power of analysis in genuine and mutual dialogue with moral concern. East Timor was the main locus of these public interventions, to the dismay of his mainstream former admirers. In private there was a blizzard of small notes and remarks, sometimes circulated, sometimes written for one person, that always retained a sweetly fine-honed judgment. As for Ben Anderson, the great killings marked the end of one phase of Feith's relationship with Indonesia, and to a large extent, of public analytical writing.<sup>106</sup>

#### **4. Politicians**

The purpose of this paper is not to analyze the Australian diplomatic and strategic response and involvement in the establishment of the New Order. Rather, it is a study of

representations of the mass killings of 1965-1966 in Australia. Naturally, politicians were involved.

The analysis of the actions and motives of different parts of the Australian state will be kept for a separate chapter. Suffice here to note the few comments made by Australian politicians at the time, and the even more limited reporting of them in the mainstream and minor media.

Naturally, given the existing situation of near war between the two countries over Confrontation, the coup and its political consequences was discussed in Parliament, and then occasionally reported in the newspapers. On October 19<sup>th</sup> the Minister for External Affairs, Paul Hasluck, made a Ministerial Statement in the House of Representatives in which he recounted the story of the PKI murder of the generals, and the fortunate escape of Generals Suharto and Nasution, though claiming, somewhat disingenuously, given the cable traffic from Jakarta, a lack of clear knowledge about the events.

“We in Australia are gravely shaken at seeing our nearest neighbour, Indonesia, shaken in this way, for we sincerely hope that Indonesia can be blessed with stability and prosperity and being realistic we know only too well that any other state of affairs would only serve the interests of those who seek to profit from unrest, discontent and turmoil. “ CPD, HR, 1965, ... 1917

Five months later, on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1966 (the day before the alleged signing by Soekarno of the Supersemar document), Hasluck gave a fuller account with the belief that the political wind was blowing the right way. He was however, still circumspect about avoiding a triumphalist note – though his colleagues showed no such restraint – reserving his public venom for the claimed Chinese government role in the instigating and then supporting the coup:

“In Indonesia the situation is in truth still so fluid that it would be neither prudent nor helpful for me to engage in comment or speculation about it. It has been noteworthy that most countries, like Australia, have recognized that this is a domestic crisis. We have been circumspect in our comments about it, like most other countries. The notable exception has been the Communist regime in Peking which, under considerable suspicion of involvement in the abortive coup of last September, has been aggressively outspoken and partisan about the whole situation ever since. Peking has used all its considerable resources of propaganda in seeking to influence openly the course of internal political developments within Indonesia.”<sup>107</sup>

There was no substantive parliamentary discussion of the killings in the first half of 1966; certainly nothing that reached the pages of the newspapers. In a written answer to a Question on Notice from the ALP member Bill Hayden about the possibility that the number of dead was in the hundreds of thousands, Hasluck played a straight bat, and quoted Sukarno's January radio broadcast, and disclaimed further knowledge. He continued, in the written answer, saying that

“Australians are naturally concerned at this suffering and loss of life. It is the constant hope of the Government that political and social stability will develop in Indonesia so that upheavals of this character will not occur.”<sup>108</sup>

In fact, as news of the killings trickled in over the following months, the atmosphere on the floor of the House became highly volatile, with Liberal and Country Party government members taunting the left of the ALP across the aisles. Yet little was reported in the mainstream press.

### ***Jim Cairns and the ALP***

*The Guardian* article in late April 1966 quoting the ALP parliamentarian, Jim Cairns, came as Cairns was becoming deeply involved with work against the Vietnam War and conscription of Australian young men to supply troops for the Australian deployment in South Vietnam. Interviewed in 1996, Cairns recalled that there was in fact very little political activity around Indonesia at the time.<sup>109</sup> He felt that this was not so much a matter of outright hostility as a matter of lack of interest in Southeast Asia.<sup>110</sup>

The remarks quoted in *The Guardian* reflected an exchange on the floor of Parliament on the night of March 22<sup>nd</sup> between himself and the Deputy Prime Minister, John McEwen, in an atmosphere which Cairns described to me as “ugly”.

“On our side not much was said [on the floor of Parliament] apart from [Gordon] Bryant and myself. We talked more in Caucus, but Caucus was unresponsive. Not because they thought it would lose votes, but because it was simply not seen to be of relevance.”<sup>111</sup>

### ***Prime Minister Harold Holt: Remarks offstage***

In thinking about the absence of public commentary on what were by then the known facts of the mass killings, let us consider one statement by the Liberal Party Prime Minister of the time, Harold Holt. Holt and other Australian conservative politicians made little secret of their delight at the destruction of the Communist Party of Indonesia, and particularly after April 1966 felt more and more comfortable with the power of Major-General Suharto.

In mid-1966, Holt visited the United States. Speaking to the Australian-American Association at the River Club in New York, Holt expressed his satisfaction with the pro-Western shift of Indonesian foreign policy and economic policy in the second quarter of 1966.

This was hardly surprising for a conservative politician, but the language that Holt chose to employ was startling:



“With 500,000 to 1 million Communist sympathizers knocked off, I think it is safe to assume a reorientation has taken place”.<sup>112</sup>

The remarks were reported in the *New York Times*, but not, so far as I can discover, in any Australian newspaper, though there were very likely Australian correspondents present<sup>113</sup>. As a representation of holocaust, the casual brutality of the first part of the sentence ( a million “knocked off”) is stunning. Surely this is Robert Lifton's “psychological numbing” at work: an adjustment to the normality of holocaust. Yet the brutality is matched, and enhanced by the smug and complacent joke in the second part of the sentence: “I think it's safe to assume a reorientation has taken place”. It is not hard to picture the smug knowing smiles of the audience.

The fact the remarks were not reported at home may not have been entirely an accident: even in the rough house atmosphere of Australian 1960s anti-communism, Holt had gone much further than would have been safe. Speaking to clubby friends abroad, Holt had let his guard down and revealed the fundamental outlook of Australian anti-communism, where the word “holocaust” had no application. Whether by their own decision or on instruction or by decision of their editors, any Australian reporters touring with the Prime Minister protected their readers from reality.

## **5. Influences on media behaviour: the systematic, the crude and the subtle**

This paper is a study of the information available to Australians from Australian newspapers and magazines at the time of the killings, on the understanding that these would have been the main sources available to most people at the time from which a knowledge of and orientation to the killings could have been formed. Accordingly, some systematic account of how these news sources produced this information is important.

### ***The systematic: Herman and Chomsky on the Propaganda Model***

Amongst a number of other important studies of news production, Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky produced a powerful predictive model of western mass media: the “Propaganda Model”. Writing first about western press treatment of East Timor under Indonesia and Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge in the middle 1970s, Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman developed a powerful theory of the “free press”<sup>114</sup>.

Terror as reported in the western media, they suggested, could be classified firstly according to its agents. “Retail” terror, carried out mainly by non-state groups of “terrorists”, receives the greatest media attention. “Wholesale” terror, carried out on a larger scale by states, receives much less, especially when the states concerned are western-aligned.

Terror could be further classified as “nefarious” terror (carried out by enemies of the west), “benign” terror (irrelevant to western interests), and “constructive” terror (carried out by allies on a large scale to establish systemic requirements. Press coverage in its

frequency and orientation reflects western interests. “Nefarious” terror will be emphasized in frequency and detail and emotional character in the press. Benign bloodbaths will be ignored. Constructive bloodbaths will be rationalized and welcomed. Respectively, Cambodia 1975-79, East Timor 1975-present, and Indonesia in 1965-66. Similarly, victims will be treated differently according to whether they are “worthy” or “unworthy”.

The key features of the model mainly derive from the setting of the mainstream media in a free market system. Five factors “work as 'filters' through which information must pass, and that individually and often in additive fashion they greatly influence media choices”: private ownership, dependence on advertising, reliance on access to government and business for sources, the public relations industry, and the prevailing anticommunist ideology.

The Indonesian holocaust is a prime example of “constructive” terror, which, in the Propaganda Model, will be received in with a degree of satisfaction. Where details are provided, they serve to explain the reason why the slaughter is acceptable. Where commentary and reporting does emerge, it will be characterized to a large degree by the “blaming the victim” syndrome depicted as singularly “unworthy” victims.

This is not the place for a detailed assessment of the Propaganda model. Chomsky and Herman have indicated what they term “first order effects” of the Propaganda Model, with many other influences beyond its content. What is clear, however, is not only that the model fits the Australian coverage of the Indonesian killings very well, but that there also examples of important influences on the contents of the Australian media at the time which are both more crude than the market-based mechanisms Herman and Chomsky emphasize, and more subtle.

### ***The crude***

Models like Herman Chomsky’s emphasize the effects of the more or less unconscious default settings of individuals working within large corporate and professional systems. They make no claim that their model includes all important processes, or completely explains the end results. Sometimes the preferences of the powerful are ensured in quite crude and simple ways.

### **The spike**

The spiking of Macklin's article provides one example of a mechanism of suppression even more crude than those more sophisticated methods Chomsky and Herman consider - direct collaboration between media managers and intelligence services to determine the content of the product. Macklin at the time was a junior writer, who had already had been “debriefed” on his return from Java and Bali in early 1966 by representatives of the security services. There is no way of knowing whether other correspondents wrote comparable accounts which were then not used by their editors. Macklin’s example suggests that maintaining relations with security and intelligence organizations were seen by his editors as more important than the benefits to the publisher of *The Age* of a world exclusive story – to say nothing of the broader responsibilities of the free press.

### “A quiet word in your ear”

Similarly, great bureaucratic pressure was applied on Radio Australia journalists and senior editors through the Department of External Affairs and the Department of Information. Richard Woolcott, then based in the Department of External Affairs Public Information section, was “liaising daily” with editors and journalists “to influence the content of leaders in practically all major metropolitan newspapers”. And when push came to shove, even mainstream radio commentators could be sidelined when necessary, as *The Sun*’s Douglas Wilkie experienced himself. Gender homogeneity didn’t hurt the effort either: “we can, if necessary, steer Radio Australia in the right course even if the ABC man in Jakarta is not entirely with us.” It is striking that no female correspondent or editor or government figure appears in this story.<sup>115</sup>

### “A cultivated sensitivity to the Army ...”

The most astonishing and direct intervention in the Australian media did not originate from Australian sources, but came from the Indonesian army less than a month after the coup. The much admired Australian ambassador in Jakarta passed on to Canberra the Army requests for censorship of Radio Australia with a *faux* world weary “I can live with this...”

These crude interventions apart, there were also further layers of influence in the structure of media discourse, more subtle processes framing the content and language of stories.

### ***The subtle***

#### Irrational Indonesians kill with kris and club

In both Australian media and bureaucratic accounts of Indonesia and Indonesians in relation to the killings, the dichotomy of irrational Indonesians and rational Australians emerges in a number of places. *The Age* editorial on April 14 branded Indonesians as “experts at double-talk”, for whom “it is too much to hope that the new Indonesian regime will be logical”.

The editorial, buttressed by Sulzberger’s authoritative account of a nation gone amok, revealed the basic structure of Australian assumptions, at once paternalist and racist: Indonesians have shown themselves to be incapable of logical or rational thought, unlike Australians. These deeply held views were widespread, and go together with the pronouncements about the two-faced and childish character of Indonesians, as for example, in the Australian ambassador’s concerns of the likelihood of

“the general laziness, deviousness, and capacity for self-delusion of any Indonesian regime.”<sup>116</sup>

#### Tropes of genocide: murder in the passive voice

The Southeast Asian correspondent of *The Age*, a senior journalist and academic political scientist named Creighton Burns<sup>117</sup>, published a great many articles on Indonesian

politics in this period, but only one sentence in thousands actually mentioned the killings, on March 19:

“Djakarta virtually escaped the violence which swept Indonesia in the wake of the October coup, and which resulted in the death of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, mostly Communist supporters and sympathizers.”<sup>118</sup>

Burns here provides an early example of a formulation that was to become widely employed in the years to come in western writing on the killings. The key is in the grammar: there is no agent of violent death here. Abstract, disembodied violence “sweeps Indonesia”, resulting in Communist death. In other versions, the phrasing is even more telling: “X number of Communists died in the wave of violence...”.

The agent-less, passive voice is appropriate for what was needed here. Because of the reports by Macklin, Sulzberger, Topping, and other sources, it was impossible to deny the existence of the holocaust directly. Equally, it was politically highly undesirable that the agency of the army and its instigation of Islamic groups be emphasized.

The discussion of mass murder in the passive voice provides, very neatly, a form of words that allows both knowledge *and* denial of holocaust at the same time.<sup>119</sup> Denial - in the psychoanalytic sense - is necessarily a central category in the analysis of responses to the Indonesian killings. And denial always involves a process of actively repressing knowledge.<sup>120</sup>

### Faces in the crowd

Tentatively, there is one other possible influence on the capacity of readers to consolidate information presented in the media that is visible in the Australian newspaper samples. This is through the effects of the personalization of foreign news through concentration on individuals, especially leaders. This may seem an obvious artifact of a leader-centred view of politics, but in the case of news about a foreign country with which readers have few other sources of either direct or mediated experience, the character of person-centred foreign news may be important.

*The Sun* in particular seemed to emphasize the role of individuals in its headlines. Of 175 stories dealing with Indonesian politics that *The Sun* published between November 1965 and June 1966, 92 headlines mentioned individuals. Soekarno appeared in almost half of these (92), and Subandrio and Nasution ten each.

## **6. Negotiating subject positions, transference and resistance.**

This is a study of representations, representations in the Australian media and public life of the murder of hundreds of thousands of people. We cannot avoid using words to represent historical events. In Indonesia, of course, the New Order state used the term “Gestapu” to refer to the Untung coup – a fine product of psychological warfare. “Gestapu” is, probably exactly as it was intended to be, a term that resists and denies

what followed on. The review of the media treatment of the killings in Australia suggests that a process of resistance and denial was certainly in existence then, and to a large extent remains so today. An examination of the role of intellectuals, and Indonesia specialists in particular, shows such issues to be of even greater importance.

I remain, after a long time thinking about the question, undecided about what overarching term to use to describe the murders. At different points I have used “genocide”, “holocaust”, “mass murders” and “the great killings”. “Mass murder” is an obvious enough descriptor, but its effect here may be diluted by current usage which often refers to tragic but somehow more private events such as killings of a dozen people by a lone man with gun. I recall Ruth McVey using the term “the great killings”, probably alluding to its use in Soviet studies. It is a term that I find helpful in this context, providing some measure of historical specificity.

Some may feel that using the terms “genocide” and “holocaust” here to describe the murder of hundreds of thousands of alleged Communists and Communist sympathizers (and others, including Chinese) is tendentious or misleading, but I can think of no more appropriate terms. “Genocide” and “holocaust” are the most controversial and difficult, and are the theme of very large, deeply engaged and engaging academic literatures.

“Genocide” presents difficulties and promise. To start with the international legal usage, the Genocide Convention developed in the context of post-World War 2 international law does not deal with killings with political intent “unless their intent is to destroy in whole or in part a national, ethnic, racial or religious group as such”. It is true that there were large numbers of Chinese victims in Indonesia, but they were not the principal victims, nor was there an attempt to destroy the Chinese as an ethnic group. Leaving aside the meaning of the term in contemporary international law, it seems that “genocide” carries a clearer, and less objectionable meaning in this case than some of the terms that have been suggested to complement it, such as “politicide” and “democide”.<sup>121</sup> Yet the horrified recognition of an expanding rather than contracting reality of ongoing horrors is precisely why the term “genocide”, with its clear limitations, has come to have a commonsense meaning encompassing the murder of very large numbers of people by a state. For the moment, until a more appropriate term is available, that is the rationale for its use in the Indonesian context.

One further intention of speaking of the Indonesian genocide is to stress the connection to the realm of positive international law, and the underlying presumption of shared human responsibility for crimes against humanity. Looking at contemporary attempts by the world community to apply the Genocide Conventions in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia, one must ask: why not Indonesia?<sup>122</sup> There are legal limitations on the applicability of the Genocide Convention to events in Indonesia more than 40 years ago. However, speaking of the Indonesian genocide places the interpretation of these events in a moral framework that demands to be shared.

“Holocaust” is a more fraught term, in Australia and elsewhere, and its use in any context today carries risks. Amongst many such, one of the most important obviously relates to

both the instrumentalisation and the sacralising of the Holocaust in relation to the state of Israel – not simply for its defence, but also in its function to legitimate that state as an act of absolute redemption.<sup>123</sup>

Here “holocaust” is used with deliberate intent, in a primarily Australian context, to force a comparison not usually made in Australia with the Nazi war against the Jews and other minorities in Western and Eastern Europe. “The holocaust next door” is a provocation with a point, and in my experience, a useful effect on readers. I would not want to hold fast to my use, if I can be persuaded of a better one. In passing we should note that the term was used in the 1930s by C.L.R. James his classic *The Black Jacobins* to refer to the mass murder of black Haitian ex-slaves by French forces in the Haitian revolution of 1791-1804.<sup>124</sup>

More to the point, in the Indonesian context, use of the term “holocaust” confronts the pattern of denial that can be seen in so many accounts (or the absence of such accounts) of the Indonesian killings. This is a study of Australian representations of past events in Indonesia, written by an Australian. The question of subject position can never be avoided in any form of social inquiry, especially one attempting to engage unarguable horror. Such inquiry always has both a psychological and political process, internal and collective, that may be usefully looked at through psychoanalytic concept of transference. Dealing with a famous account of the Nazi war against the Jews, Dominick LaCapra set out the problem that is relevant to this study, by focusing on a question of process, and of the relation of historian to historical materials at issue, and on the wider social process involved.

“[H]ow should one negotiate transferential relations to the object of study whereby processes active in it are repeated with more or less significant variations in the account of the historian? The Holocaust presents the historian with transference in the most traumatic and disconcerting form conceivable.”<sup>125</sup>

And writing of the wider German “historians debate”,

I maintain that one crucial - perhaps the central - historical issue is whether (and how) the Holocaust is attended to or whether attention is diverted from it in a manner that decreases chances that it will be 'worked through' to the extent that it possibly can be worked through.<sup>126</sup>

To speak of the Indonesian holocaust is to give a possibly appropriate name to massive collective trauma, a trauma that remains largely unspeakable in Indonesia. More to the point for this study, that trauma in certain respects reached and reaches beyond Indonesia, as the pattern of deformed representation that I have noted might suggest. LaCapra speaks to precisely this point speaking of one limiting case in history:

“The Holocaust presents the historian with transference in the most traumatic form conceivable – but in a form that will vary with the difference in subject-position of the analyst. Whether the historian or analyst is a survivor, a relative of

survivors, a former Nazi, a former collaborator, a relative of former Nazis or collaborators, a younger Jew or German distanced from more immediate contact with survival, participation, or collaboration, or a relative 'outsider' to these problems will make a difference even in the meaning of statements formally identical."<sup>127</sup>

In this argument then, when we are reading 45 year old newspaper articles in Australia (or elsewhere) we are looking at representations of holocaust in Indonesia. Transference has abounded amongst those who have heard or listened to earlier versions of this paper. Here I am thinking of those who are not Indonesian, but Australian or American. Some have responded with tears of distress or shame. Some, as I have already mentioned, wondered how they could have been in Indonesia at the time of the killings and not responded to them, or in some cases, even been aware. Others have impugned the motives behind the study, or particular parts of it. One listener, who was working in an embassy in Jakarta in 1965, ended up shouting and pointing his finger at me saying "you cannot know what it was like. It was them or us".<sup>128</sup> There could hardly have been a clearer indication of unworked through transference relations and resistance.<sup>129</sup>

And so to my title: "Witness denied". Using the term "holocaust", with its overtones of "sacrifice" and its religious roots, reminds us that "witness" has, in English, a double meaning. There is the person who takes the role of "witness" in relation to an event, the person who says "this is what happened". My first question then is, who were the Australian witnesses? In what way did Australian newspapers report the Indonesian killings of 1965-66? What did Australian political figures and intellectuals say at that time? What was said in the Australian community at that time?

But there is a second meaning of the word "witness" in English, a sense captured in the phrase "to bear witness", meaning to speak of what has been seen, to speak actively of what has happened, and to not be silent. The Australian media and political response to the Indonesian holocaust was a matter of "witness denied" in this sense as well. This is significant not just in the *realpolitik* world, but in the moral sense that many people assume flows from Auschwitz onwards: a responsibility to bear witness to holocaust and genocide. Unlike in Indonesia itself, in 1960s Australia (or Japan or North America), speaking truth to power required no great risk. Yet, witness was systematically denied.

I began this work trying to answer what seemed to me to be an odd puzzle: why didn't people my age and older in Australia know about the killings? That simple puzzle has led to somewhat more complicated puzzles, bearing a great deal of moral and intellectual weight. It has been a saddening study, particularly tracing back through the intellectual history of my own (former) field of Indonesian politics and history.

All of our work is an act of representation, but we have paid astonishingly little attention to our own intellectual history.<sup>130</sup> The story of the representation of the great killings in Indonesia is the point where anti-communism, the demands of the Cold War national security state, and in the Australian case at least, a deep measure of racism, fused to

smother and then sever the moral connection to a shared humanity and moral responsibility.

“History and memory” is understandably a highly salient and much traversed territory in recent years. At times I have used the term “apparent amnesia” in the Australian context. And yet “amnesia” itself is quite wrong: with Tiffen’s near-contemporary survey evidence confirming an anecdotal understanding, the point is that Australians by and large did not know about the killings, for reasons primarily to do with the nature of the information afforded to them by the mass media of the time. At the very least we can say that they did not know in a manner or with a level of certainty which allowed them to recall and name the events.

The difference, for this media audience, between the recognition of “Pol Pot’s Cambodian genocide” and the comparable killings in Indonesia makes this clear. Not only was the information largely withheld by the government and mass media organizations of the day, but to the limited extent it was presented in a tangential and distorted manner, no agent was named clearly and repeatedly as with Pol Pot. The use of the passive voice without active subject, the avoidances of shared humanity deriving from the fact that the victims of “benign terror” were communist and hence “unworthy”, as well as cruder instrumental interventions, all contributed.

This was not amnesia, because, by and large, it was not a matter of forgetting. Yet traces of the trauma remain amongst those outside Indonesia who did not forget. Just as importantly, the holocaust in Indonesia in 1965 and 1966 not only changed Indonesia forever, but also marked a restart in relations between Australia and Indonesia. Harold Holt’s jocular men’s remark in an all male establishment club environment in mid-1966 to “a reorientation” having taken place, is a marker in Australian history of the country’s relationship to the wider strategic, economic and financial repositioning of Indonesia in relation to the Cold War structure of global relations.

### ***A last resistance***

In the small world of Australia itself, there remains one final profound consequence of the killings to note, in a belief firmly held in certain quarters that spans the half century since the killings. It was powerfully expressed by one of its frequent proponents, Paul Keating, on the occasion of his eulogy for Suharto in 2008:

We can only imagine what Australia's strategic position would be like if Indonesia's 230 million people degenerated into a fractured, lawless state reminiscent of Nigeria or Zimbabwe. For the past 40 years, we have been spending roughly 2 per cent of gross domestic product on defence - about \$20 billion a year in today's dollars. The figure would be more like seven to eight times that, about \$150 billion today, if Indonesia had become a fractured, politically stricken state. Had Soeharto's New Order government not displaced the Soekarno government and the massive PKI communist party, the postwar history



of Australia would have been completely different. A communist-dominated Indonesia would have destabilised Australia and all of South-East Asia.”<sup>131</sup>

This is an argument I have heard from many people, including Jim Cairns and lesser lights in the Labor Party. On more than one occasion I recall, Herb Feith also said he believed it.<sup>132</sup> Keating’s version completely avoids reference to the *sine qua non* of that transformation – the multiple ways in which the New Order state was founded on the mass killing it orchestrated and carried out – the constitutive terror. Cairns and Feith of course did not avert their eyes. But neither did they work through a systematic assessment of the counter-factual involved.

Careful and rigorous counter-factual reasoning is perhaps the only way that this proposition could be tested, except for careful comparative study.<sup>133</sup> But counter-factuals without such reasoning may also be most susceptible to unacknowledged transference relations and conscious or unconscious external influences. Keating’s counter-factual stands as another brick in the wall of Australian denial of the holocaust next door.

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<sup>1</sup> By “public knowledge” I mean knowledge held by a large part of the population as memory that can be recalled by individuals in relation to events identified in public discourse, including the media. Such knowledge may be derived from direct experience or through mediated forms – such as the media or social networks – but it is centred on the individual’s memory. In his *The Texture of Memory*, James Young usefully distinguishes “collected memory” from “collective memory”, where the former refers to a socially constructed process that enables us, through shared forms and spaces, to attribute collective meaning to memories that remain, nevertheless, personal and disparate.” *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, (Yale U.P. 1994).

<sup>2</sup> On “constitutive terror” and other varieties of terror in New Order Indonesia see Richard Tanter, “The Totalitarian Ambition: Intelligence and Security Agencies in Indonesia”, in Arief Budiman, *State and Civil Society in Indonesia*, (Monash University, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990), esp. pp. 264-271, and Richard Tanter, *Intelligence Agencies and Third World Militarization: A Case Study of Indonesia*, Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Politics, Monash University, 1991, pp. 354-423.

<http://www.nautilus.org/about/staff/richard-tanter/richard-papers/indonesian-intelligence/thesis/thesis - toc>

<sup>3</sup> This paper is part of a longer study which will also contain comparisons of the Australian media coverage with that of Japan and the United States, as well as an analysis of the Australian government role in Indonesia in the mid-1960s.

<sup>4</sup> Emphasis added. See Rodney Tiffen, *Symbolic Processes and Outgroup Politics*, (Monash University, Department of Sociology, Ph.D. dissertation, 1976), pp. 331-332.

<sup>5</sup> See below, section 6. For a brief comment on the legal difficulties of the concept of “genocide” in relation to Indonesia in 1965-66, see Richard Tanter, “Suharto’s War Crimes: the case for an international criminal tribunal”, *Inside Indonesia*, 55, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> I was thinking here of the occasions when former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating spoke with admiration and affection for former President Suharto. To get a flavour, see Keating’s eulogy for Suharto: Paul Keating, “The nation builder”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, February 2, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism (The Political Economy of Human Rights, Volume 1)*, Spokesman Books, 1979.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Tanter, ‘In memory of Herb Feith’ November 2001.

<http://nautilus.rmit.edu.au/publications/herb-feith.html>

<sup>9</sup> ‘Witness Denied: Australian media responses to the Indonesian killings of 1965-66’, *Inside Indonesia*, No. 71, July - September, 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Ross Tapsell, Australian reporting of the Indonesian killings of 1965-66: the media as the “first rough draft of history”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Volume 54, Issue 2, June 2008; and Karim Najjarine and Drew Cottle, “The Department of External Affairs, the ABC and reporting of the Indonesian crisis 1965-1969”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (Mar. 2003).

<sup>11</sup> One was a lecture in the annual Winter Lecture Series on Indonesia in August 1996, and the other was a seminar presentation in the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies.

<sup>12</sup> Saskia Wieringa, “The Birth of the New Order State in Indonesia: Sexual Politics and Nationalism”, *Journal of Women’s History*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Spring 2003, pp. 70-91.

<sup>13</sup> See section 6. below. These responses were sometimes as surprising to the respondents as they were to me. One senior academic recalled going to Java in January 1966, and while she was aware of the killings, being clear at the time that she did not want to see the beautiful land before her in that light. As a specialist in Cambodian history nodded, she went on to recall a sense of respect amongst visitors for the silence amongst their hosts, with a feeling of finding it hard to condemn a whole way of life that one was witnessing. Another colleague who was very concerned with issues relating to the PKI in his academic career and personal relationships recalled with a sense of amazement and shame that he was in Java as a young student in early 1966 but was oblivious to the killings.

<sup>14</sup> I owe particular and profound debts to Herb Feith and Dan Lev. Many others read earlier versions of the paper and participated in discussions about it: Jojo Abinales, Ben Anderson, Alastair Bain, Frank Bennett, Jim Cairns, David Chandler, Richard Chauvel, Noam Chomsky, Peter Christoff, Charles Coppel, Robert Cribb, Jane Drakard, Greg Fealy, Keith Foulcher, Boris Frankel, Leon Glezer, Bruce Grant, Andrew Gunawan, Barbara Hatley, Ben Kiernan, Joel Kovel, Sylvie Le Clezio, John Legge, Robert Macklin, Luisa Macmillan, Malcolm Macmillan, Angus McIntyre, Frank Palmos, Janet Penny, Krishna Sen, Geoff Sharp,

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Mohammed Slamet, Julie Stephens, Seymour Topping, Michael Van Langenberg, Gerry Van Klinken, Saskia Wieringa, Marian Wilkinson, and Ron Witton.

<sup>15</sup> The approach here is to take two major Melbourne papers as a sample of the Australian press response. Obviously, the materials that appeared in other papers would modify the conclusions of this survey to some extent. But *The Sun* and *The Age* together dominated the Melbourne morning audience. *The Herald*, in the same stable as *The Sun*, was the only evening paper. *The Australian*, which was the first newspaper to reach successfully for national circulation, was still a relatively small paper at this stage, as was the specialist business paper, *The Australian Financial Review*. However, *The Australian's* Southeast Asia correspondent was the experienced journalist and former editor of *The Bulletin*, Peter Hastings. See Hastings' vivid and chilling recollections of his observations of Indonesia in the months after the coup and of the ongoing killings in *The Road to Lembang: A Retrospect, 1938-1966*, (Griffith University, Centre for the Study of Australia-Asia Relations, Australians in Asia Series No. 5, 1990), pp. 25-35.

<sup>16</sup> For technical reasons, the study of the coverage of the two papers was approached slightly differently. The systematic newspaper search was conducted before the advent of the internet and media databases. Since the Victorian State Library holds a more or less comprehensive index for *The Age* covering this period, it was possible to work from that with a fair degree of confidence. The search of *The Age* covers the period from the beginning of October 1965 to December 1967. There is no index for *The Sun*, and as a result, I searched the microfilm records of the paper daily from October 1965 to the end of June 1966.

<sup>17</sup> Burns' predecessor as *The Age's* Southeast Asia correspondent, also based in Singapore, was Bruce Grant.

<sup>18</sup> The editors of *The Sun*, according to Pamos, gave him little direction, other than occasionally asking for feature articles - mainly because they and others in Australia knew little about Indonesia.

<sup>19</sup> For example, see Pamos's stories, "I talked with Indonesia's big two" - Sun man in the palace", *Sun News-Pictorial*, 17th March, 1966, p.1; and "The Formidable Task: Rebuilding Indonesia: Recovery... or Ruin? Sun Man Frank Pamos in Jakarta talks to Dr Adam Malik", *Sun News-Pictorial*, 21st June, 1966, p.21. Pamos filed 365 stories and 1,000 photographs in 1964: see Pamos, *Ridding the Devils*, (Sydney: Bantam, 1990), pp. 4-5.

<sup>20</sup> "Java strife shifts to Borneo", *Sun News-Pictorial*, October 30, 1965, p.2.

<sup>21</sup> *Sun News-Pictorial*, November 1, 1965, p.2.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> "40 poisoned - Reds shot", *Sun News-Pictorial*, November 8, 1965, p.2. Reading this half sentence is extraordinarily disturbing when you try to imagine what actually happened - and how the story came to the journalist. Saskia Wieringa noted in 2009, even now "the underlying sexual currents are hidden under deep layers of fear, guilt, horror". Saskia Wieringa, *Sexual Slander and the 1965-1966 Mass Killings in Indonesia: Political and Methodological Considerations*, Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series No. 125, November 2009, p.4.

<sup>24</sup> "Aidit reported shot dead - but Army silent", *Sun News-Pictorial*, November 30, 1965, p.9. Three days later there was a follow-up: "They say Aidit is dead", December 2, 1965, p.6.

<sup>25</sup> "Back me now, or, I'll be toppled", *Sun News-Pictorial*, January 17, 1965, p.1.

<sup>26</sup> "Soekarno puts off 'solution'", *Sun News-Pictorial*, January 24, 1966, p.6.

<sup>27</sup> Douglas Wilkie, "Now it's children's hour in Jakarta", *Sun News-Pictorial*, March 9, 1966, p.31.

<sup>28</sup> Frank Pamos, "So Indonesia counts its dead", *Sun News-Pictorial*, August 5, 1966, p.2. Substantially the same report was also published in the *Economist* (August 20, pp. 727-728), and the *Adelaide Advertiser* ("Massacre Toll in Indonesia", August 6), and possibly elsewhere.

<sup>29</sup> Pamos, *Ridding the Devils*, *op. cit.*, p.14. Pamos writes that, after he broke the story in *The Economist*, "after a few weeks, the *Economist* wished to recant, although they never went into print saying it. They had a female American foreign editor who was adamant that they should 'give the new government a chance' but this did not manifest itself as an editor's order". (Frank Pamos, letter to the author, August 22, 1996).

<sup>30</sup> In his autobiography, Pamos wrote of his own experiences and views: "I saw pieces of bodies in canals and streams, the emptied houses of the Communist Party (PKI) leaders, families gone. Perhaps one million people were killed in the reprisals against the Communists. I considered that the Communists themselves would have killed even greater numbers as they 'straightened out' society and the country into a downward spiral ruling by terror and taking the people further into poverty." *Ridding the Devils*, *op. cit.*, p.7. These experiences gave rise to regular nightmares, and contributed, together with lucky escape from an NLF ambush in Vietnam shortly after, to later serious psychological breakdown: "...twenty months' exposure to

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violent social conflict, while I was still quite young, was having its toll.” (p.8) Pamos' account of his repeated nightmare of this time points to the much wider experience of extreme violence at the unconscious level for millions of Indonesians: “I kept dreaming that men with rifles were shooting at ordinary people from hip level, and people were falling forward, the wrong way. The soldiers looked at each other with nervous smiles, speaking with the victims. Everybody seemed in terrible danger. Sometimes there were huge holes in the thin terracotta-tiled roofs; we would often try to help the dying people stand up, and then I would recognise them as family friends. In my dreams I recognised the soldiers shooting as my friends, too. Then everyone sat around, mostly on our heels, our knees high and forward, eating grilled corncobs, while my closest Indonesian friend Kusumo sat next to me. I was always, in those dreams, as in real life, helpless to ward off some dark terror that surrounded us all.” (pp. 8-9) Interpreting dreams at a distance is always risky, where it is not offensive to the person, but it is worth noting the possibility of an interaction of an individual element, specific to the particular person, with reference to and experience of wider shared social elements. See Charlotte Beradt, *The Third Reich of Dreams*, (Quadrangle Books, 1968). In Pamos' account, the sense of helplessness and apparent inevitability of violent - and almost casually administered - death from the military, whatever Pamos' personal inner and concrete experience and his political beliefs, points to a much wider shared experience - and ongoing trauma.

<sup>31</sup> Shortly afterwards, Pamos, like many other foreign correspondents in Jakarta, was transferred to Saigon. Personal communication from Frank Pamos.

<sup>32</sup> *The Age* index in the Victorian State Library separates articles according to Indonesia - Politics”, “Indonesia - Government”, “Indonesia - Economy”, etc. To avoid double-counting, this figure is for the first category only. The total coverage in *The Age* accordingly was greater still - considerably so.

<sup>33</sup> “Reds occupy large regions in Java”, *The Age*, November 1, 1965, p.1.

<sup>34</sup> “Pres. Sukarno's warning”, *The Age*, October 25, 1965, pp.1,4.

<sup>35</sup> “More coup arrests”, *The Age*, November 20, 1965, p.1.

<sup>36</sup> “100,000 Communists held since coup”, December 21, 1965, p.1.

<sup>37</sup> “Java Civil War Threatens - Martial Law”, *The Age*, October 29, 1965, p.1.

<sup>38</sup> “87,000 killed in Indonesia since coup bid”, *The Age*, January 17, 1966, p.1. “Later Radio Djakarta rebroadcast the President's speech, but omitted any reference to the death toll.”

<sup>39</sup> Robert Macklin, “The killings go on ..... Troubled times in Indonesia”, *The Age*, January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1966, p.10.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Macklin, interview with the author, Canberra, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1996.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Macklin, interview with the author, Canberra, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1996.

<sup>42</sup> Editorial, *The Age*, February 23, 1966

<sup>43</sup> *The Age*, April 14, 1966, p.7; complete text in “When a Nation Runs Amok”, *New York Times*, April 13, 1966, p.42:3 .

<sup>44</sup> See Harrison Salisbury, *Without Fear or Favor: The New York Times and Its Times*, (New York: Times Books, 1980), pp. 450-451, 561-575.

<sup>45</sup> See Seth King, “The Great Purge in Indonesia”, *New York Times Magazine*, May 8, 1966, p.89, and Anton Lucas, “Bu Yeti's Story”, in Cribb, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

<sup>46</sup> Columbia University academic Andrew March attacked Sulzberger the following week for his “Asia where life is cheap” remark, concluding “the full implication (which I don't think Mr. Sulzberger endorses) is that we can bear Asians dying, because it's inevitable, and anyway they don't mind.” *New York Times*, April 20, 1966, p.40:4. In fact, the unconscious implications are the more powerful precisely because of that fact.

<sup>47</sup> See Robert Cribb (ed.) *The Indonesian Killings 1965-1966: Studies from Java and Bali*, (Monash papers on Southeast Asia No. 21, 1966), pp. 33-35. Cribb points out that what really needs to be explained is “the meekness with which many of the victims seem to have gone to their deaths.” (p.34).

<sup>48</sup> *The Age*, August 24, 1966, p.4; complete text in the *New York Times*, August 24, 1966, p.1:5, “Slaughter of Reds Gives Indonesia a Grim Legacy”.

<sup>49</sup> The complete text is Seymour Topping, “Slaughter of Reds Gives Indonesia a Grim Legacy”, *New York Times*, August 24, 1966, pp. 1;5.

<sup>50</sup> The other articles were “Sukarno Still Struggling To Hold On in Indonesia”, *New York Times*, August 22, 1966; “65 Uprising in Indonesia: Study in Red Blundering”, *New York Times*, August 23, 1966; and “A 'New' Indonesia Faces Huge Tasks”, *New York Times*, August 25, 1966.

<sup>51</sup> Seymour Topping, interview with the author, New York, June 23, 1999.

- <sup>52</sup> Seymour Topping, interview with the author, New York, June 23, 1999.
- <sup>53</sup> Errol Hodge notes that the particular character of the Radio Australia commentaries' "authoritative" tone was in part achieved by dismissing commentators unwilling to follow "the line" suggested by the Department of External Affairs. Hodge, *Radio wars: truth, propaganda, and the struggle for Radio Australia*, (Cambridge U.P., 1995), p. 166. Cited in Karim Najjarine and Drew Cottle, "The Department of External Affairs, the ABC and reporting of the Indonesian crisis 1965-1969", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (March 2003), p. 49.
- <sup>54</sup> John Legge, interview with the author, February 21, 1996.
- <sup>55</sup> Karim Najjarine and Drew Cottle, "The Department of External Affairs, the ABC and reporting of the Indonesian crisis 1965-1969", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (Mar. 2003), pp. 48-60. See also "Radio caught in the crossfire", *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 12, 1999. Further details of Australian government knowledge of the coup and the killings, based on US documents, is provided in Marian Wilkinson, "Hidden Holocaust", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 July 1999; and David Jenkins, "The Silent Watchers", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 July 1999.
- <sup>56</sup> Najjarine and Cottle, *op. cit.*, p.51.
- <sup>57</sup> "Radio caught in the crossfire", *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 12, 1999..
- <sup>58</sup> Letter from Gordon Jockel to K.Shann, 15 October 1965. NAA: 1838/280, 3034/2/1/8 Part 2. "Indonesia-Political-Coup-d'Etat of October 1965"; cited by Najjarine and Cottle, *op. cit.* p. 54.
- <sup>59</sup> Memorandum No. 661, from R.A.Woolcott, Public Information Officer, Department of External Affairs, to Acting Secretary Sir Lawrence McIntyre, no date. NAA: 1838/280, 3034/2/1/8 Part 1. "Indonesia-Political-Coup-d'Etat of October 1965"; cited by Najjarine and Cottle, *op. cit.* p. 58.
- <sup>60</sup> Submission for Minister for Information by D.O.Hay. Subject, Radio Australia – Handling of Indonesian Situation. . NAA: 1838/280, 3034/2/1/8 Part 3. "Radio Australia – Posts – Relations With Indonesia"; by Najjarine and Cottle, *op. cit.* p. 52.
- <sup>61</sup> Cablegram number 1340 from Shann to External Affairs, Canberra. Dated 5 November 1965, received 8 November 1965. NAA: 1838/280, 3034/2/1/8 Part 1. "Indonesia-Political-Coup-d'Etat of October 1965"; cited by Najjarine and Cottle, *op. cit.* p. 53.
- <sup>62</sup> Melbourne University Press.
- <sup>63</sup> Bruce Grant, interview with the author, Melbourne, March 8, 1996.
- <sup>64</sup> Grant was also concerned to use the trip to update his *Indonesia*. Bruce Grant, interview with the author, Melbourne, March 8, 1996. Herb Feith's recollection of Grant's April 1966 trip is rather different. The idea of sending someone to Indonesia on Amnesty International's behalf originated with Bridget Mellor, visiting Melbourne from Britain. "If my memory is right she suggested that a well-respected Australian who knows something about Indonesia should go there on a mission to protest the mass arrests and ongoing killings." Herb Feith, letter to the author, October 8, 1996. Mellor published a significant article on the killings herself a few months later in Britain: "Political killings in Indonesia", *New Statesman*, 5 August 1966, p.189.
- <sup>65</sup> The second edition of Grant's *Indonesia* contains the following references to the killings: "With the defeat of the coup, a wave of anti-communism swept Indonesia, bringing the one-sided slaughter and imprisonment of thousands of PKI supporters and sympathizers."(p.58) "PKI members and sympathizers were hunted down by the army and by mobs the length and breadth of Indonesia. By December a fact-finding committee established that 87,000 had been killed, but this was thought to be a conservative figure. Sporadic killing went on into 1966 and observers put the number of dead as high as 200,000 or 300,000; some put it even higher." p.71.
- <sup>66</sup> Bruce Grant, "The Mood in Djakarta", *Dissent*, No. 18, Spring 1966, p.11-13. *Dissent* was at the time close to the more liberal amongst the burgeoning Whitlam wing of the Labor Party: Grant himself was actively involved in the Fabian Society and went on to be Whitlam's High Commissioner to India.
- <sup>67</sup> *ibid*, p.11.
- <sup>68</sup> John Legge suggests Soedjatmoko or Ganis Harsono. (John Legge, interview with the author, February 21, 1996.) There is also the possibility that G. is a composite character, presenting the essence of widely held views of a certain stream of Indonesian opinion. Grant himself has declined to reveal G.'s identity, citing his original assurances of confidentiality, and significantly, the difficulties that G. might still experience more than three decades later. (Bruce Grant, personal communication, March 1996).

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<sup>69</sup> McAuley to Vivian Smith, cited by Cassandra Pybus, *The Devil and James McAuley*, University of Queensland Press, 1999, p.200.

<sup>70</sup> McAuley's Indonesia report was published just months after it was revealed that *Quadrant*, like the British magazine *Encounter*, which like *Quadrant*, grew out of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, had received substantial secret funding from the United States Central Intelligence Agency. McAuley's subsequent admission was published as "C.I.A.", *Quadrant*, May/June 1967, Vol. XI, No. 3, pp. 4-6. Christopher Lasch published much of the original discoveries in the US in "The Cultural Cold War", *The Nation* (U.S.), 11 September 1967, pp. 198-212. See also Pybus, *op. cit.*, chapter 9.

<sup>71</sup> James McAuley, "Three kinds of trouble", *Quadrant*, (40) Vol. X, No. 2 (March-April 1966), pp. 3-15; Pybus, *op. cit.* p. 210 ff. gives details of the Kuala Lumpur conference funded by the Australian Association for Cultural Freedom and the London-based Congress for Cultural Freedom.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, p.6. As a contrast to Sukarno as the evil clown, McAuley heaped praise on South Vietnam's then recently installed prime minister, Air Vice-Marshal Ky, whom he met on the same trip. Ky, McAuley wrote, is "impressive simply by not trying to act an impressive part ... the green-festooned jungle helmet hanging decoratively on the wall of his office bespeaks the gallant airman whose courage is acknowledged." James McAuley, "Vietnam Leader No Longer the Brash Tyro", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 March 1966; cited by Pybus, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

<sup>73</sup> James McAuley, "By Way of Prologue", *Quadrant*, Vol. I, No. 1 (1956); cited by Pybus, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>74</sup> Joel Kovel, *Red Hunting in the Promised Land: Anticommunism and the Making of America*, (Basic Books, 1994), p. 9.

<sup>75</sup> The blackhole anticommunist characterization in its religious mode is confirmed for McAuley with Donald Horne's astonishment "one day when McAuley told him in all seriousness that Evatt [leader of the opposition Australian Labor Party] was a personification of the Devil." Pybus, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>76</sup> L.G. [Leon Glezer], "Killings", *Dissent*, Winter 1966, p.5.

<sup>77</sup> Glezer's remark here is puzzling, since it does not fit with the evidence from the survey of *The Age* and *The Sun*. Several explanations are possible. One is that other newspapers - perhaps *The Herald* or *The Australian* - published much more on the killings before mid-1966 than other papers. Another possibility is that other press sources carried such stories. *The Bulletin*, the major weekly political magazine edited by McAuley's *Quadrant* co-editor Donald Horne, carried even less material on the killings than *The Age* and *The Sun*. It is possible, though unlikely, that radio or television carried such material. The most likely interpretation is that Glezer and others skilled in analyzing skimpy newspaper reports picked up the story from other sources and learned to read between the lines of the minimal Australian daily newspaper reports. But there is then the odd story of Grant - the best known Australian popular author writing on Indonesia at the time - maintaining he knew little or nothing about the killings before his trip to Jakarta in April 1966. Bruce Grant, interview with the author, Melbourne, March 8, 1996.

<sup>78</sup> "'Hands off SOBSI' say Australian unionists", *The Guardian*, November 11, 1966, p. 8.

<sup>79</sup> "'Stop execution of Njono' - Communist Party cable to President Sukarno", *The Guardian*, March 3,

1966, p.6; and "'Release jailed unionists' - sheet metal workers", *The Guardian*, March 3, 1966, p.6.

<sup>80</sup> "'Blood of 200,000 on hands of Indonesian generals' - U.S. writer", *The Guardian*, April 28, 1966, p.7.

<sup>81</sup> Ben Anderson, letter to the author, October 9, 1999. Mortimer writes movingly of the ambiguous and contradictory effects of that visit in the preface to his masterly *Indonesian Communism Under Sukarno: Ideology and Politics, 1959-1965*, (Cornell U.P., 1974).

<sup>82</sup> Rex Mortimer, "Indonesia A Year After the Coup", *Australian Left Review*, October-November 1966, p.50.

<sup>83</sup> Herb Feith, "The Indonesian Killings: to moralise or analyse?", *The Nation*, February 19, 1966, pp. 9-11.

<sup>84</sup> Leon Glezer, interview with the author.

<sup>85</sup> Though it should be noted that while Feith supervised many PhD students from Indonesia and Australia, there was little or no similarity of theoretical or political outlook - e.g. Rex Mortimer, Ulf Sundhaussen, Harold Crouch, Charles Coppell, Gary Smith, Krishna Sen, David Bouchier, Shim Jae-kwon, and myself.

<sup>86</sup> Herb Feith responded generously to earlier drafts of this paper in letters and interviews, excerpts of which are included below with his permission.

<sup>87</sup> Feith said that A and B were roughly speaking himself and Heinz Arndt, the ANU economist. Herb Feith, interview with the author.

<sup>88</sup> Herb Feith, interview with the author.

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<sup>89</sup> B. goes on here: “But it's not only that. If you look at it on the Australian side, the people who would rub their hands in glee at your protest would be the racialists in our midst.”

<sup>90</sup> Feith could not recall whether this was his sub-title, or one provided by the magazine sub-editor.

<sup>91</sup> Herb Feith, letter to the author, October 8th, 1996.

<sup>92</sup> I am grateful to Julie Stephens for this interpretation.

<sup>93</sup> It is important to note that this is the one significant point where Herb disagreed seriously with my analysis: “I want to protest when you say that analysis in the form of realpolitik wins out. The sub-title with that bad word 'moralize' in it may have been chosen by the editors, but I can't be sure it wasn't my own. But people seem to have drawn the conclusion I allowed B. to win the argument.... Weberian tragedy and realpolitik yes, but not anti-communism. If B were anti-communist he would not have put Aidit in exactly the same box as Nasution as a practical vigorous modernizer and the sort of leader Indonesia needs.” Herb Feith, letter to the author, October 8, 1996.

<sup>94</sup> Peter Hastings, *The Road to Lembang: A Retrospect, 1938-1966* (Griffith University, Centre for the Study of Australia-Asia Relations, Australians in Asia Series No. 5, 1990), p.16. As an Australian specialist on Indonesia Feith's fame was paralleled at the time by that of his Monash colleague, the historian John Legge, with his *Central authority and regional autonomy in Indonesia : a study in local administration, 1950-1960*, Cornell U.P., 1961; *Indonesia*, (Prentice-Hall, 1964); and *Sukarno: a political biography*, (Penguin, 1972).

<sup>95</sup> “The Dynamics of Guided Democracy”, in Ruth T. McVey (ed.), *Indonesia (rev. ed.)*, (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1963); “Indonesia's political symbols and their wielders”, *World Politics*, XVI,1 (1963), and “President Soekarno, the army and the communists: the triangle changes shape”, *Asian Survey*, IV, 8 (1964).

<sup>96</sup> See Rex Mortimer, ‘From Ball to Arndt: Liberal Impasse in Australian Scholarship on Southeast Asia’, in Rex Mortimer (ed.) *Showcase state: the illusion of Indonesia's 'accelerated modernisation'*, Angus and Robertson, 1973.

<sup>97</sup> Noam Chomsky, “Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship”, and “The Responsibilities of Intellectuals”, in his *American Power and the New Mandarins*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969).

<sup>98</sup> Feith disagreed strongly with being labeled “anti-communist” in any sense, then or subsequently.

<sup>99</sup> Ben Anderson has given a moving account of his own response to Sudisman in the introduction to his translation of Sudisman's defence speech: Sudisman, *Analysis of Responsibility*, (Melbourne: Light, Powder and Construction Works: 1974). He also spoke of that last day in an interview in 2001: “Sudisman, too, kept his composure when he addressed the court. Anderson recalls, ‘Sudisman was so dignified, so calm, and his speech was so great, that I felt a kind of moral obligation’ to do something. ‘As Sudisman was leaving the courtroom for the last time,’ Anderson remembers, ‘he looked at me and Herb. He didn't say anything, but I had such a strong feeling that he was thinking: “You have to help us. Probably you two are the only ones I can trust to make sure that what I said will survive.” It was like an appeal from a dying man.”” Scott Sherman, “A Return to Java”, *Lingua Franca*, October 2001, Vol. 11, No. 7.

<sup>100</sup> Sudisman, *Analysis of Responsibility*, translated by Benedict R.O’G. Anderson, Melbourne: Light, Powder and Construction Works: 1975; and Sherman, *op. cit.*

<sup>101</sup> On Hardoyo see Anton Lucas, *What makes an activist? Three Life Histories*, Indonesian Studies Working Paper, No 12, June 2010, Sydney University.

<sup>102</sup> Herb Feith, letter to the author, October 8, 1996.

<sup>103</sup> See Joel Kovel, *Red Hunting in the Promised Land*, (New York: Basic Books, 1994) on psychic splitting and anti-communism, esp. chapter 4 on George Kennan.

<sup>104</sup> Herb Feith, interview with the author, Melbourne, February 1996. John Legge confirmed the importance of Soedjatmoko to this group of Melbourne-based Australian analysts of Indonesian politics. He recalled the enormous relief for Soedjatmoko, with him saying “If it hadn't been us doing it to them, it would have been them doing it to us.” John Legge, interview with the author, February 21, 1996.

<sup>105</sup> Charles Coppell, in response to a seminar on this topic, argues that Feith was “very active” in 1966 and 1967, searching out and circulating a great deal of information about the killings and the leftist prisoners. Personal communication, October 16.

<sup>106</sup> Lest there be any doubt here, I hope I may be allowed to quote from a portion of my own obituary for Herb, written a few days after his death:

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“‘Brilliant’ is a word you hear a lot said of certain intellectuals, especially in the academy. And when you think about it, it’s not an altogether glowing recommendation. There’s something of the dazzling about it, the star rather coldly shining his light upon the rest of us. Herb was indeed analytically brilliant, in the conventional sense of the word, as well as an astonishingly astute observer of Indonesia. Listening to him after he got back from time in Indonesia was to be reminded time and again by the delicacy and precision of his observation, his listening to what was not said, as well as what was.

But what was really striking about Herb’s thinking was its extraordinary compassion for and deep knowledge of the people he was talking about and with, together with a deeply held belief in the responsibility of intellectuals - in the broadest sense of that word - for the honesty and accuracy of what they said.

I remember once asking Herb during a long walk along the creek in Glen Iris at a more than usually bleak time in Indonesian politics how it was he had never returned to the themes of his great work on *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia* to write on a comparable scale about what then seemed to be the unending New Order. It was clear that there were in fact all sorts of reasons, but his answer then was “I suppose I didn’t think I could bring myself to be fair to the army”. I have to confess that it is a measure in the great difference in the quality of scholarship between us that my own small work suffered from no such qualms. It was also a remarkably honest and decent self-assessment, which is salutary to remember in these days when self-aggrandizement and the suspension of humility is an unwritten requirement of most academic job descriptions.

One of the most attractive things about Herb’s thinking - and there were a lot of other bits that drove me crazy on occasion - was a kind of final ruthlessness in assessment of people and political situations. This might seem like an odd quality to admire in a friend and teacher, but it was deeply re-assuring. It enforced an unusual and much-needed degree of intellectual honesty. Applied to myself it was sometimes uncomfortable or worse, but rarely inappropriate. But it was also deeply re-assuring. It gave me the sense that the possibilities of being within our too real reality that Herb glimpsed and succoured were founded in a careful and on occasion steely understanding of the frailties of action.”

Richard Tanter, 'In memory of Herb Feith' November 2001.

<sup>107</sup> Commonwealth of Australia. House of Representatives. (1965). *Parliamentary Debates*. (Paul Hasluck, Minister for External Affairs. 19 October 1965, p. 1917.

<sup>108</sup> Commonwealth of Australia. House of Representatives. (1966) *Parliamentary debates*, Answers to Questions on Notice: Question No. 1574. (Paul Hasluck, Minister for External Affairs), 16 March 1966.

<sup>109</sup> Geoff Sharp, a founder of the then recently-established non-CPA Marxist journal *Arena* in Melbourne confirms Cairns’ memory of few if any meetings in the year after the coup. Geoff Sharp, interview with the author.

<sup>110</sup> Jim Cairns, interview with the author, August 7, 1996. This was one of Cairns’ main concerns at the time. In 1965 he published his *Living With Asia*, Lansdowne Press.

<sup>111</sup> Jim Cairns, interview with the author, August 7, 1996.

<sup>112</sup> Henry Raymond, “Holt Says U.S. Actions Protect All Non-Red Asia”, *New York Times*, July 6, 1966, p.

<sup>113</sup> The first to cite the *New York Times* report of Holt’s statement was Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism (The Political Economy of Human Rights, Volume 1)*, Spokesman Books, 1979, p.217.

<sup>114</sup> See Chomsky and Herman, *op. cit.*; Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: the Political Economy of the Mass Media*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), pp. 1-36; and Milan Rai, *Chomsky’s Politics*, (London: Verso, 1995), pp. 19-32. There is a large literature on Herman and Chomsky’s model, and vigorous responses. For the former, see especially Philip Schlesinger, “From production to propaganda?”, *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 11 (1989) pp. 295-301. For the latter see

<sup>115</sup> Class factors were also relevant in a more subtle way. Despite the fact that Creighton Burns’ stories for *The Age* were highly dependent on assistance from the Australian embassy in Jakarta, and the fact that he



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spoke no Indonesian, I can recall the slight distaste that some of my own lecturers had for the hugely productive and Indonesian-speaking Frank Palmos when he was invited to a Melbourne University Indonesian Club dinner in 1968 or 1969. Not only did Palmos write for the tabloid *Sun*, but in an Australia – and a university - that was still largely controlled by men from Anglo-Protestant backgrounds, Palmos the son of recent Greek immigrants was subtly presented as perhaps not quite the model for a bright student to follow.

<sup>116</sup> Inward Cablegram number 304 from Shann to External Affairs Canberra. Dated 16 March 1966, received 17 March 1966. NAA: A1838/273, 570/7/9 Part 3. “Radio Australia – Posts – Relations with Indonesia”. Cited by Najjarine and Cottle, *op. cit.*, p.54.

<sup>117</sup> Herb Feith remarked that “Creighton never really got a feel for Indonesia”. Herb Feith, interview with the author, Melbourne, March 1996.

<sup>118</sup> Creighton Burns, “Generals confront Dr. Sukarno”, *The Age*, March 19, 1966, p.5.

<sup>119</sup> One telling example appeared in *The Age* on August 4 of the same year: “Communist terror strikes Bali”, p.1. While the head and lead stressed Communist guerilla resistance, the subtext was that they thereby brought “fresh terror [my emphasis] to the beautiful but bloodstained island of Bali” after “a nightmare of killing and torture” after the coup. “[a]t least 5,000 Communists were slaughtered... Even women and children were hacked to death in the bloodbath...”

<sup>120</sup> See section 5 below using the work of Dominick LaCapra *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory Trauma*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell U.P., 1994). See also Joel Kovel, *Red-Hunting in the Promised Land*, (Basic Books, 1994), and Robert J. Lifton, *The Broken Connection*, (Touchstone, 1979).

<sup>121</sup> See especially the work of R.J.Rummel; for example in his *Death by Government*, Transaction Books, 1994.

<sup>122</sup> See Richard Tanter, “Suharto's War Crimes: the case for an international criminal tribunal”, *Inside Indonesia*, 55, 1998.

<sup>123</sup> C.f. Jacqueline Rose, *The Last Resistance*, (Verso, 2007), *passim*. Ben Anderson objected on reasonable grounds: “I'm generally hostile to ‘holocaust’ because of its commercial cheapening over here. Also to ‘genocide’ because it makes real genocide (e.g. wiping out of Amazon Indians e.g.) too common.” Ben Anderson, letter to the author, October 9, 1999.

<sup>124</sup> C.L.R.James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, (1938; Vintage, 1989).

<sup>125</sup> Dominick LaCapra, “Reviews: Arno J. Mayer, *Why did the Heavens not Darken? The ‘Final Solution’ in History*. New York: Pantheon, 1988, *New German Critique*, No. 53 (Spring - Summer, 1991), p. 177.

<sup>126</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory Trauma*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell U.P., 1994), pp. 45, 48.

<sup>127</sup> LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust*, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>128</sup> See also fn 14. above. This exchange ended with the speaker privately saying to me that I could not possibly make such judgments, because I have never faced combat. In other words, until you have been in the most extreme situations, the historian should beware judgment of those who have. LaCapra has provided a better reply than I managed at the time:

“It is, moreover, not a defence of a generalized non-judgmental attitude to observe that, in cases where one has not been tested by comparable circumstances, one may be in no position to judge particular individuals. The judgments one seeks through an exchange with the past are related instead to more general questions of interpretation and argument that become specified, not as one plays imaginary God or just judge vis-a-vis others in the past, but as one confronts difficult challenges in the present and future.” LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust*, *op. cit.*, p.11.

<sup>129</sup> Note also Frank Palmos’s recording of his own long-running nightmares. In Palmos’ account, the sense of helplessness and apparent inevitability of violent - and almost casually administered - death from the military, whatever Palmos’ personal inner and concrete experience and his political beliefs, points to a much wider shared experience - and ongoing trauma. See fn.31 above.

<sup>130</sup> On the foundations of the post-war expansion of North American area studies”, especially in East and Southeast Asia, in the demands for intelligence and policy advice of the US national security state see Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Immanuel Wallerstein and others, *The Cold War and the University: Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years*, (New York: The New Press, 1997; and Bruce Cumings, “Boundary Displacement: Areas Studies and International Studies During and After the Cold

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War”, *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 29, No.1, Jan.-March 1997; reprinted in his *Parallax visions: making sense of American-East Asian relations*, Duke University Press, 1999).

<sup>131</sup> Paul Keating, “The nation builder”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, February 2, 2008.

<sup>132</sup> From memory, the earliest occasion I recall Herb speaking of this – and it would have been the first time I heard the myth – would have been around 1982 or 1983 after he introduced me to the novelist and poet David Martin. I then became closely involved with David in his work on what became his *Armed Neutrality for Australia*, (Dove Communications, 1984).

<sup>133</sup> See especially Richard Ned Lebow, *Forbidden Fruit: Counterfactuals and International Relations*, Princeton U.P, 2010; and Niall Ferguson, “Virtual History: Towards a 'chaotic' theory of the past” in Ferguson (ed.), *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals*, Basic Books, 1999.