

## **Aspects of Britain's Relations with Indonesia during the Period of *Konfrontasi* 1963 to 1966**

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I am less qualified than many observers of Indonesian affairs to offer a view on British relations with Indonesia. I have seen Indonesia from the sea and from the air, but never landed there. The few words of *bahasa* I know include *konfrontasi* ("confrontation") and *ganjang Malaysia* ("crush Malaysia"), though the acronyms NEKOLIM, NASAKOM, NEFO and OLDEFO <sup>1</sup> along with Ampera (the message of the people's suffering), Berdikari (standing on your own feet), Tavip (the Year of Living Dangerously) and Manipol/USDEK (political manifesto/1945 Constitution, Socialism, Guided Democracy, guided economy and Indonesian identity) were my constant companions during the time that I was Indonesia Desk Officer at the Foreign Office from early 1963 to mid 1966. This period covered the duration of *konfrontasi* against Malaysia, which lasted from September 1963 to August 1966, and included the rebellion on 1 October 1965 led by Lt Col Untung of the Palace Guard (the Tjakrabirawa Regiment) against the Indonesian Army General Staff ("SUAD") supposedly designed to forestall a coup by a "Council of Generals" allegedly sponsored by the CIA, but which was quickly suppressed by Suharto and resulted in the elimination of the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia or "PKI") as a political force in the country and the deaths of several hundred thousand Indonesians.

I would not have ventured to look again some 35 years later at this period of my Foreign Office service had it not been for John Pilger's ITV documentary broadcast on 18 July 2001 "The New Rulers of the World" about Indonesia and Globalisation, a curtain-raiser to the G8 Conference in Genoa which opened two days later. Now Pilger and I had crossed swords before in 1991 over Cambodia, and if you read the references to my alleged nefarious activities in "Distant Voices" <sup>2</sup>, you might be inclined to conclude that I am a dangerous man indeed. So I was particularly curious to see what Pilger had to say about British policy towards Indonesia. On the whole, the programme was not too bad, and followed the pattern of earlier documentaries by Pilger on East Timor and Burma by saying things which certainly needed to be said, though Pilger's distinctive style is not to my taste. A few days after the ITV programme, Pilger wrote an article for the *Guardian Weekend* (23 July 2001 issue) which covered much of the same ground.

On Indonesia, Pilger understandably stressed the importance of the accession to power by Suharto in the wake of Untung's rebellion which became known officially as GESTAPU or G30S/PKI<sup>3</sup>. Three particular criticisms of British actions at the time were made by Pilger, one a supposed recommendation by Sir Andrew Gilchrist in favour of "a little shooting", the second a suggestion of direct involvement in the holocaust when British warships allegedly escorted an Indonesian troop-ship transporting units from Sumatra to Java to suppress the PKI, and the third (in the *Guardian Weekend* only) Britain's perceived "spin" in reporting the slaughter as a kid-glove coup without butchery.

All three allegations can however be refuted by reference to the context and time-set of the original texts of the reports quoted as evidence. The reports have been used in a partial manner in order to sensationalise alleged British collusion which in fact never occurred.

The ITV programme led me to ponder on the policy in which, as Indonesia Desk Officer at the time, I had been intimately involved. Within a very short time I realised that I had opened a veritable Pandora's Box concerning the events of 1965. The release to the public in recent years of official documents in the United States, Britain and Australia has sparked off renewed controversy about who was actually behind the Untung affair, with suspicion falling significantly on Suharto himself for involvement in, if not masterminding the rebellion which according to the latest theory was supposedly designed to fail and provide Suharto with the excuse needed to eliminate the PKI, who were rivals for power, and thus to secure his own ascendancy over Sukarno.

Accordingly a main purpose of this paper is to seek to restore a measure of historical balance to the interpretation of these events, and to encourage a more objective and independent analysis of this very important period of recent Indonesian history, whose lessons may well be relevant to our assessment of the changes currently taking place in that dynamic and exciting country.

As my point of departure, I feel it best to start with the allegation, now frequently used as a *leitmotif* in assessing British policy towards Indonesia at the time, that both Britain and the United States actively connived to bring about President Sukarno's downfall.

## **Harold Macmillan and the 1962 “pact” with President Kennedy to “liquidate” Sukarno**

I first read about this reported understanding between President Kennedy and British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan in a recently published (and very readable) book <sup>4</sup> by Roland Challis, who was the BBC’s South East Asia correspondent from 1964-1969 and who also appeared in Pilger’s programme. Challis noted in his book (page 58) that when they met in April 1962, President Kennedy and Prime Minister Harold Macmillan “were recorded as agreeing that it was desirable to ‘liquidate’ President Sukarno” and he also refers on page 95 to “that minuted agreement” concerning this understanding. I need hardly say that, for those of us in the Foreign Office actually dealing with Indonesian affairs at the time, it was most definitely not British policy to work for the “liquidation” of Sukarno, and the notion that such an “agreement” had been concluded would have been regarded as nonsensical. Challis did however give a precise and apparently respectable source for his statement, namely *Britain’s Secret Propaganda War 1948 –1977*<sup>5</sup>.

When I consulted this latter book, I was referred to an article by “PHS” [Printing House Square or gossip column] in *The Times* of 8 August 1986. There I read that “amazing revelations” would appear in a book to be published soon by American author William Blum in *The CIA: a Forgotten History*<sup>6</sup>. According to *The Times*, a “sensational” CIA report, which had now been declassified and which Blum was to reproduce, recorded the impressions of a CIA officer of conversations with “Western diplomats” shortly after the Macmillan-Kennedy meeting at which “the two leaders agreed to liquidate President Sukarno, depending on the situation and available opportunities”. “Sadly for history - *The Times* noted – the name of the CIA officer who penned this extraordinary report has been deleted.” *The Times* went on to say that “Lord Stockton (as Harold Macmillan had then become) was not available for comment this week, but his grandson, Alexander, tells me that a check on his private papers at his home, Birch Grove, has revealed ‘no such items’ on the Kennedy-Macmillan agenda. One of the most highly-placed MI6 officers at the time assures me that he had no knowledge of the alleged discussion. Nor does he believe that ‘liquidate’ could have meant bumping Sukarno off. ‘However, they might have discussed the best way of getting

rid of this awkward fellow.” On the other hand, I would suggest, if the report has no basis in fact, they would not have done so.

The notion that “Supermac” might have discussed “liquidating” Sukarno in April 1962 strikes me as quite bizarre. As Stig Aga Aandstad has pointed out in his excellent study <sup>7</sup> of US policy towards Indonesia at the time, the period from President Kennedy’s inauguration in January 1961 to the summer of 1963 was characterised by his determination, strongly supported by US Ambassador Howard Jones in Jakarta and advocates in both the White House (notably Assistant National Security Advisor Walt Rostow and his staff members Robert Komer and Robert Johnson) and State Department (notably Assistant Secretary Averill Harriman), to put the US relationship with Indonesia onto a new, co-operative and mutually beneficial footing. This began with a visit by Sukarno to the United States in April 1961 when the President went out of his way to establish a personal rapport with Sukarno. Despite reservations by Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Kennedy supported the Indonesian case for incorporating West Irian into Indonesia, then still under Dutch administration, and applied considerable pressure on the Dutch to this end, and successfully so. In February 1962 his brother Robert Kennedy visited Indonesia, primarily to promote a solution to the West Irian problem, and when Macmillan and Kennedy met in late April 1962, little else would have been discussed except the West Irian crisis, with Macmillan even recorded <sup>8</sup> as agreeing to exert pressure himself on the Dutch.

The negotiations between Indonesia and The Netherlands were conducted under the guidance of Kennedy’s personal envoy Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker who secured acceptance from both parties to a phased Dutch withdrawal from West Irian. On 15 August 1962 the Dutch and Indonesians signed the agreement. The following day, Kennedy wrote that: “I would like to see us capitalize on the US role to move toward a new and better relationship with Indonesia”. Programmes of economic aid, based on recommendations <sup>9</sup> already made by a mission led by Professor Don D Humphrey, were approved. Indeed, everything looked to be moving in a very positive direction for US interests, had not the Indonesians begun a few weeks later to make it clear that they were strongly opposed to the concept of the proposed new Federation of Malaysia.

What is however important to note is that the period from January 1961 to late 1962, and even into the spring of 1963, saw a marked rapprochement between Indonesia and the United States

which is inconsistent with allegations that, far from wishing to cultivate Sukarno, Kennedy agreed with Macmillan in April 1962 that they both wanted to “liquidate” him.

It is in the nature of conversations between leaders of the US and UK that at the most some 30 minutes would have been devoted to even the most intractable problems during their meeting, and in many cases discussion of a particular topic would be little more than a broad exchange of views lasting perhaps no more than five or ten minutes. Macmillan would have taken with him briefs on some 30 or more subjects, and apart from West Irian, I doubt that the conversation with the President on Indonesia would have covered anything other than a few general remarks. The idea that they would have discussed the “liquidation” of Sukarno on such an occasion is simply not credible. Even after *konfrontasi* had begun, Kennedy was still determined to develop the relationship with Sukarno, and suggested in a meeting with Lord Home, who was about to become Britain’s Prime Minister, at the White House in October 1963 that: “Perhaps we [Britain] had some sort of fixation about President Sukarno”<sup>10</sup>. This does not sound like the kind of remark by a President who only the previous year had allegedly agreed on Sukarno’s “liquidation”.

The absurdity of the situation, and the fact that there appears to be only one CIA report in existence about “liquidating” Sukarno, encouraged me to track down the original report in order to evaluate its content. After all, why should a CIA officer (presumably at an overseas post) report on his impressions of conversations with “Western diplomats” when the Director of Central Intelligence would already have received an authoritative report directly from the White House of what transpired at the Kennedy-Macmillan talks?

In the circumstances, I contacted William Blum directly, and he kindly pointed me in the right direction. I found the CIA document on a micro-fiche at the London School of Economics<sup>11</sup>. It consists of two parts: a covering note by a CIA officer, who is not identified, and an attached document graded Secret whose author is likewise not identified and from which Blum and subsequent writers and analysts have extracted certain sentences. A closer reading of the CIA covering report, however, makes it clear that the author of the second document is not a CIA officer, since the document is described as a translation (from a foreign language), and that the CIA assessment of the document is that it is “a genuine document” from a source “with good contacts”. However, the information is “unevaluated” and the appraisal of the contents is “tentative”. Details about where and when the document was acquired have been deleted.

However, some three months elapsed between the date of origin of the document (18 June 1962) and its distribution within the CIA system (17 September 1962). This suggests that it would probably have been “acquired” by the CIA in their own inimitable way in the first week of September 1962, translated at post, transmitted to CIA Headquarters in the United States and then distributed to all concerned.

The document, which is five pages in length, is primarily a report on Indonesian-Pakistani relations, and from its context it is apparent that it was prepared by a senior Indonesian diplomat in Pakistan, most probably the Indonesian Ambassador. As construction of the new capital of Islamabad only began in 1961 and the first residents only moved there in 1963, I assume that the Indonesian Embassy at that time (1962) was still based in Karachi. The opening paragraphs of the translation read:

“I {Indonesian author – D.T.} have concluded from the impressions I have received from conversations with Western diplomats {in Karachi – D.T.} that President Kennedy and PM MacMillan agreed on the following matters in their recent meeting and will attempt to carry these things out.

#### Syria

Penetration and cultivation of young officers.....the West will attempt to influence young officers and high field-grade officers.

#### Leadership of Nonaligned Countries

President Kennedy and PM MacMillan also agreed to continue their efforts to get close to President Tito, PM Nehru, President Nasser and Nkrumah so that they can separate/estrangle them from President Sukarno [and him] from the political chess game in Asia and Africa particularly and in the international world generally. Thus it is clear that in the arena of international politics generally and in Asia and Africa particularly the figure and role of President Sukarno will be eliminated and lose prominence.

### Meeting of Kennedy and MacMillan

1. They agreed to liquidate President Sukarno, depending upon the situation and available opportunities. (It is not clear to me {Indonesian author – D.T.} whether murder or overthrow is intended by the word liquidate.)
2. They agreed to urge the Dutch to make immediate preparations for negotiations with Indonesia on the West Irian problem, saying that it would not be prudent of the Dutch if they did not immediately indicate a desire to negotiate. (We {Indonesia – D.T.} must give our earnest attention to the real possibility that the Dutch may be willing to negotiate only if no limits or other determinations are established for the negotiations).

Note: The report above is reproduced verbatim from the document annexed to the CIA evaluation. Words in ( ) brackets are by the Indonesian author. The two words in [ ] brackets are explanatory words by the CIA translator. Words in {} brackets are my own clarification. “MacMillan” should have been spelt “Macmillan” throughout.

The rest of the report, some four pages, mainly concerns Indonesian-Pakistani relations, including reports of conversations with unnamed, but clearly senior Pakistani officials, about aspects of Pakistani foreign policy and about the possibility of Indonesia acquiring parachutes and cargo chutes through Pakistan from US sources. Various critical remarks are made about US policies in the region, and the report concludes by noting that the US “is determining whether or not the time is ripe for the liquidation of Ayub Khan”. Its length suggests that it must have been a letter rather than a telegram, possibly a routine round-up of comment and events.

The Indonesian author clearly had a fixation about the “liquidation” by the United States of his own Head of State (Sukarno) and the Head of State of the country to which he was accredited (Ayub Khan).

It is apparent to anyone who takes the trouble to read the file that the covering report is a CIA assessment of an annexed document, which is itself a translation of a report acquired by the CIA without the knowledge of the author, who was most probably the Indonesian Ambassador in Pakistan reporting to the Indonesian Foreign Ministry.

The comment about “liquidate” can then be seen as a piece of inspired nonsense inserted primarily for the benefit of the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Dr Subandrio, so that he could further

poison the mind of President Sukarno about alleged US-UK machinations to remove him from power. A good Indonesian Ambassador at the time would have known what was expected of him. The only “Western diplomats” in Pakistan likely to have received any detailed briefing about the Kennedy-Macmillan talks would have been in the US, British and Dutch diplomatic missions. The British and the Americans might well have told the Indonesian Ambassador in confidence that their governments had agreed to put pressure on the Dutch to negotiate over West Irian.

I need hardly add that this document provides no serious evidence whatsoever that a Kennedy-Macmillan pact to “liquidate” Sukarno ever existed. Authors who have relied on this report to castigate US and UK policy at the time towards Indonesia might now well wish to consider revising any subsequent edition of their work.

### **Colonel Hadibroto and the British Warships**

I mentioned above that in his ITV programme John Pilger had suggested that the report that two British warships had accompanied a ship transporting troops from Sumatra to Java after the Untung affair indicated direct British involvement in the holocaust which followed the suppression of the rebellion. In the *Guardian Weekend* article, Pilger was hardly less circumspect when he recorded that “British warships escorted a ship full of Indonesian troops down the Malacca Straits, so that they could take part in this terrible holocaust”, clearly implying a measure of collusion. It was only when I read Roland Challis’s book that I learned that the sole source for this evidence (another sole source, like the document on “liquidation”) was an anonymous account of the capture and death of the PKI Chairman, D N Aidit, which appeared in the newspaper *Kompas Minggu* <sup>12</sup> on 5 October 1980, a translation of which Carmel Budjardjo, the human rights activist who spent some six years in prison after the abortive coup, has kindly sent to me.

Challis himself acknowledges that this account is “somewhat suspect”. It is one of several versions of how Aidit met his fate. I would agree with Challis that the account in *Kompas Minggu* is unreliable.

The anonymous author asserts that between 2 and 13 October 1965, without instructions from Jakarta (which I find quite astonishing), Col Yasir Hadibroto sailed down the Malacca Straits to

Jakarta with two battalions of para-commandos assigned to KOSTRAD [Korps Tjangan Strategis Angkatan Darat – Army Strategic Reserve Corp] stationed at Kisaran in Sumatra, south of Medan, “escorted by two British warships” in a Panamanian vessel (which he and his friends had presumably found at Medan). Hadibroto is quoted as saying that it might have been because of the presence of these British warships that Indonesian Police patrol boats intercepted the vessel and refused to allow the troops to land. As for the British ships, Hadibroto is further quoted as saying that “I don’t know why these British ships escorted us”, though the article begins by stating that the battalions were part of the IVth KOSTRAD Infantry Brigade “to be air-dropped into Malaysia and Singapore”, surely sufficient reason for the Royal Navy to take the closest possible interest in their destination.

All this does at least confirm that there was no collusion between the British and the Indonesians over the passage of the troop-ship.

Hadibroto is eventually allowed to land, makes his way to KOSTRAD Headquarters, is tasked by Suharto to track down Aidit in Central Java, instructs the ship to make for Semarang while he drives down by jeep, and meets up with his troops who are eventually landed, after living on a diet of fruit which the Panamanian vessel was fortunately carrying, because the troops when embarking had inexplicably not taken any food on board. “By this time it was 13<sup>th</sup> October 1965”. The rest of the article contains an account of the capture and death of Aidit on 22 November 1965 (though analysts like Anderson and McVey<sup>13</sup> believe he was eliminated some four weeks previously, which if true would mean that the *Kompas Minggu* report is little more than a fabrication).

Even if we take the “evidence” in the *Kompas Minggu* article at its face value, by no stretch of the imagination could the “escort” by British warships around 6 to 10 October 1965 of two battalions of para-commandos engaged in *konfrontasi* against Malaysia be interpreted as direct involvement in the holocaust against the PKI which had not by then begun, or had even been contemplated except perhaps by Suharto himself. This was also at least two weeks before the first, tentative contacts were made with the Indonesians who were to seek assurances that British forces would not endeavour to take advantage of Indonesia’s internal difficulties at the time by stepping up action against Indonesian forces (which hawks on the British side were inclined to favour). If the story in *Kompas Minggu* is even only broadly true, then I am quite sure

the British ships would have given the Panamanian vessel the closest possible escort, to make sure that no landings took place in either Malaysia or Singapore, and that if the vessel had made its way to Pontianak in Kalimantan to strengthen Indonesian units confronting Commonwealth forces in Borneo instead of to Java, for whatever reason, then the British warships might have been inclined to take more interventionist action than merely “escorting”.

In short, the report about the passage down the Straits of Malacca by Colonel Hadibroto and his para-commandoes has clearly been sensationalised in order to indict Britain for alleged collusion with the Indonesian Army in the action against the PKI in Java, although the events described in the 1980 press report, and especially their timing, cannot be interpreted in that sense by any reasonable person.

Hadibroto, incidentally, was subsequently promoted to Major-General and became Governor of Lampung Province in southern Sumatra, a post which he held for ten years from 1978 to 1988. From the account of a now senior Indonesian official in London who dealt with Hadibroto personally in his civilian capacity, he was not a typically military character, but acted as an effective and competent Governor. James Balowski, researcher in Indonesian politics and history, has claimed <sup>14</sup> that Hadibroto gave at least three versions of his capture of Aidit (1980, 1983 and 1985) and that “by the third version, Yasir appears to have taken the initiative himself”, that is, without instructions from Suharto. It is difficult to know quite what to believe. There has been no independent confirmation from any other Indonesian source that Hadibroto was indeed the senior officer involved in the capture and death of Aidit.

### **Keeping the Lid on *Konfrontasi***

In the general context of Britain’s defence relations with Indonesia at the time, critics have sought to claim that the tentative overtures made by the Indonesians to us after the G30S affair, and our own endeavours to reassure the Indonesians that we would not take advantage of their domestic troubles, for example by over-aggressive patrolling along the border with Kalimantan, are evidence that Britain deliberately intervened on the side of the Indonesian Army to assist their troop redeployments aiming at crushing the PKI. Our contacts with the Indonesians on military matters at that time however were few and far between, though the Americans acted on one or two occasions as intermediaries.

At a meeting <sup>15</sup> between US, UK, Australian and New Zealand officials in London on 1 and 2 December 1965, that is, some two months after the failed rebellion, while there was agreement about the general desirability of securing an end to *konfrontasi*, the Americans “argued that it would be premature and unwise to make [take] any Western initiative towards the Generals, because they were still preoccupied with domestic problems” adding significantly: “There was no American channel to [the] Generals suitable for political exchanges.....We should wait until the Generals were ready to talk to us. The Australians.....fully supported American arguments and were emphatically opposed to any initiative from our side.” It was indeed not until after Suharto had assumed power from Sukarno in the wake of the events of 10-11 March 1966, when Sukarno signed over to Suharto broad authority [in fact, technically no more than “.....to take all necessary steps to guarantee security and calm, and the stability of the running of the government.....”], that the way was open to make meaningful contact with the Indonesians on ending *Konfrontasi* <sup>16</sup>.

For the six months after G30S, there was nothing more than a verbal “gentlemen’s agreement” that neither side would seek to make life difficult for the other side.

Politically, if not militarily, *konfrontasi* continued.

### **Sir Andrew Gilchrist and “a little shooting”**

If I have disposed of the accusation of “connivance” in the holocaust, let me now do the same with the second allegation in the ITV documentary that the British Ambassador in Jakarta, Sir Andrew Gilchrist, recommended that “a little shooting in Indonesia would be an essential preliminary to effective change”. Looking through files in the Public Record Office, I did indeed find these words in a letter written by the Ambassador two days after the discovery on 3 October 1965 of the bodies of the six murdered generals (and one of Nasution’s aides) in a well at Halim Airbase. The letter <sup>17</sup> was a brief note of regret to Ted Peck, then Assistant Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office for Asian-Pacific affairs, about the deaths of two of the Generals for whom the Ambassador had particular respect, Generals Yani and Parman, and he prefaced his remarks by saying:

“I have never concealed from you my belief that a little shooting in Indonesia would be an essential preliminary to effective change in Indonesia, but it makes me sad to think that they have begun with the wrong people.”

No reasonable person could argue that these words, in what was essentially a personal letter from Ambassador to Under-Secretary, should be construed as a recommendation to anyone to initiate “a little shooting”.

The Ambassador simply stated his belief that a solution to Indonesia’s problems might sooner come about if one or two people were to disappear permanently from the scene, but it was sad that they – the Indonesians – had started with the wrong people. “I shall miss them both and regret that they should have met such dirty deaths”. The words have been taken out of context, and converted into a recommendation, which was in fact never made. The murder of the six generals, incidentally, which sparked off the vicious counter-reaction by Suharto, was not thought worthy of mention in the ITV documentary, though it was the catalyst for Suharto’s purge (and it was at least included in the article in the *Guardian Weekend*).

The version of Gilchrist’s remarks in the *Guardian Weekend* contained yet another twist. The passage reads:

“In 1966, the US ambassador in Jakarta assured Suharto that the ‘US is generally sympathetic with and admiring of what the army is doing’. The British ambassador, Sir Andrew Gilchrist, reported to the Foreign Office: “I have never concealed from you my belief that a little shooting in Indonesia would be an essential preliminary to effective change.” Having armed and equipped much of the army [in point of fact, it was the Soviet Union who had supplied most arms and equipment to the army, and continued to do so for some time after the purge of PKI for reasons connected with the Sino-Soviet dispute then raging] Washington .....

Note: You will notice that the date of the letter – 5 October 1965 – is not given, nor is the sentence quoted in full, since this would make it of no use for the purposes which Pilger had in mind. However, Gilchrist is no longer alleged to have “recommended” a little shooting; he was merely “reporting”.

I think it is clear that Pilger felt it essential for the purposes of his article to balance the US Ambassador's apparent approval of what was happening in Indonesia with an equivalent expression of British support, but the only phrase he could find was the extract he used from Gilchrist's letter, even though it had nothing whatsoever to with the point at issue, but out of context and without any date-line might appear to be an expression of support for the purge.

## **Gilchrist Correspondence – Fact and Fiction**

On 18 September 1963 the British Embassy in Jakarta, which only two days previously had been the scene of a hostile demonstration, was ransacked and burnt by a crowd of youths protesting against the creation of Malaysia. This was to be the start of nearly three years of *konfrontasi*. Ambassador Gilchrist was concerned about the security of the Embassy's classified papers, so a very careful watch was kept on the strong-room, assisted by Australian and US diplomats. Gilchrist suspected that his telegram out-file – which an Australian diplomat recovered intact from his office – might have been compromised, though this was in fact unlikely. Gilchrist's personal diary records <sup>18</sup>: "I must clean up the strong-room question first, time running out. The Russians could do it in a few hours – they could fly a man in.....Those Australians in again. They picked up some stuff upstairs which indicates my out telegram file must have been compromised." More serious however was the Ambassador's suspicion that his personal safe outside the strong-room might have been surreptitiously opened and the contents of his personal "black box" read by Indonesian Intelligence – notably Foreign Minister Subandrio's BPI or Central Intelligence Organisation.

There was nothing of any great consequence in the "black box" except for the carbon copy of a Secret and Personal Letter to the Foreign Office in which Gilchrist had made some uncomplimentary remarks about Sukarno, notably a reference to Sukarno acting "like a cornered rat". Gilchrist strongly suspected that Subandrio had fed the letter to Sukarno because of an oblique remark which Subandrio subsequently made to Gilchrist about "cornered rats". This is indeed confirmed from another source, Peter Dale Scott, who, in a note to his article <sup>19</sup> in *Pacific Affairs* Summer 1985 on *The United States and the Overthrow of Sukarno 1965-67*, spoke of "a more incriminating letter from Ambassador Gilchrist, which Sukarno had discussed with Lyndon Johnson's envoy Michael Forrestal in mid-February 1965, and whose authenticity Forrestal (who knew of the latter) did not deny" – more "incriminating", that is, than the more infamous "Gilchrist

letter” which I discuss below; though why a letter written by an Ambassador about the personality of the Head of State of the country to which he was accredited should be regarded in any sense as “incriminating “ is hard to fathom, especially as practically every Ambassador in Jakarta would have been writing such letters at the time, very possibly in even more juicy and outrageous language than Gilchrist employed. Gilchrist suspected nonetheless that the letter might be used against him to declare him *persona non grata*. However, the letter was never published, and the copy sent to London might not have survived if it was written on a purely personal basis, though Gilchrist refers in a Secret and Personal letter of 22 September 1965 <sup>20</sup> to “the little matter of the ‘cornered rat’”. One good reason why it was never published or leaked by the Indonesians was that this would have been tantamount to an admission that Indonesia had violated the immunity of the Embassy’s archives respected under generally accepted principles of International Law and nowadays guaranteed under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

### **Allegations of British “Spin”**

In the *Guardian Weekend* article Pilger reported how “British intelligence manipulated the press so expertly that Norman Reddaway, Head of the Foreign Office’s Information Research Department (IRD), boasted to Ambassador Gilchrist in a letter marked ‘secret and personal’ that the spin he and his colleagues had orchestrated – that Sukarno’s continued rule would lead to a communist takeover – went all over the world and back again. He describes an experienced Fleet Street journalist agreeing ‘to give your angle on events in his article.....i.e. that this was a kid-glove coup without butchery.’ Roland Challis.....believes that the cover-up of the massacres was a triumph for western propaganda.”

The letter <sup>21</sup> dated 18 July 1966 may be found in the Churchill Archives Centre. The quotation [“.....i.e. that this was a kid-glove coup without butchery”] has been taken out of context. This is apparent from a fuller version of the quotation which reads:

“(f) On the 12 th March [1966] your telegram about the handover of power [on 11 March 1966 when Sukarno gave Suharto general authority to act in his name] enabled us to lead the world’s news by several hours.....

(g) Gavin Young agreed to give exactly your angle on [these] events in his article in *The Observer* of 13<sup>th</sup> March [1966] i.e. that this was a kid glove coup without butchery, denunciations and suspension of law and order.”

You will by now have grasped the point. Reddaway was not talking about the Untung affair of 1 October 1965 and the subsequent ruthless and indiscriminate slaughter. Pilger has either misunderstood or manipulated the context and focussed the reader either wittingly or unwittingly on the wrong event.

Reddaway was talking about another and later coup, which resulted in the effective transfer of administrative power to Suharto on 11 March 1966 following demonstrations in late February and early March 1966 against Sukarno who had on 21 February 1966 ousted Nasution as Defence Minister, removed several moderates from his Cabinet and appointed several left-wingers. Suharto's action led to a series of protests by workers and students, who included the sons and daughters of leading moderate politicians and Army officers. The Foreign Ministry was ransacked in protest against the retention of Foreign Minister Subandrio, several Chinese occupied buildings like the New China News Agency were wrecked, and there were also counter-demonstrations against the US Embassy. Generally however violence was limited, and the peaceful coup by Suharto indeed passed off “without butchery, denunciations and suspension of law and order” following a confrontation between Sukarno and Suharto when Sukarno played his last card and sought unsuccessfully to dismiss Suharto as Army Commander.

A Foreign Office Guidance Telegram which I drafted and which was issued on 14 March 1966<sup>22</sup> sought to put Suharto's assumption of effective power in perspective. It noted that, in an Order of the Day, Suharto had stressed that Indonesia would “continue to pursue a leftward, socialist course”. It concluded that: “At this stage it would be wrong to assume that the Indonesians will suddenly show themselves better disposed towards the West or take any immediate steps towards calling off confrontation.” Any notion of “collusion” or “co-operation” with Suharto was still some months away.

This may also explain why Pilger quoted *Time Magazine* of 15 July 1966 (Special Report on Suharto - “the West's best news for years in Asia”) and *The New York Times* of 19 June 1966 (leading article by columnist James Reston - “A gleam of light in Asia”) as examples of the

heartless cynicism in US reporting of the holocaust, not as a crime against humanity, but in terms of economic advantage to the West. But in fact in those particular issues the journals were focussed on recent political changes in Indonesia seen as encouraging for the West and stemming from Suharto's assumption of effective power in March that year. Even so, James Reston noted in his article that there had been a "savage transformation" of Indonesia from a pro-Chinese policy under Sukarno to a defiantly anti-Communist policy under Suharto, and he went on to refer to the events which followed the abortive coup as "the Indonesian massacre". This hardly suggests that the bloodbath was swept under the carpet as the US began to concentrate on Indonesia's economic rehabilitation.

It should also be pointed out that both *Time Magazine* and *The New York Times* had indeed carried graphic and harrowing accounts of the slaughter in Indonesia on more than one occasion. *The New York Times* of 12 March 1966 referred to the holocaust as "one of the most savage mass slaughters of modern political history". *Time Magazine* of 17 December 1965 was praised even by the ultra-radical, Trotskyist US Workers World Party <sup>23</sup> because the journal had "objectively reported" that:

"Communists, red sympathizers and their families are being massacred by the thousands. Backlands army units are reported to have executed thousands of Communists after interrogation in remote jails.....The murder campaign became so brazen in parts of rural East Java that Moslem bands placed the heads of victims on poles and paraded them through villages. The killings have been on such a scale that the disposal of the corpses has created a serious sanitation problem in East Java and Northern Sumatra where the humid air bears the reek of decaying flesh....." [Extracts]

For its part, *Life* magazine of 11 July 1966 described the violence as "tinged not only with fanaticism but with bloodlust and something like witchcraft". The *New York Times Magazine* of 8 May 1966 ran an article by Seth King, their South East Asian correspondent, who quoted a schoolteacher in a village near Jogjakarta:

"Nearly 100 Communists, or suspected Communists, were herded into the town's botanical gardens and mowed down with a machine gun.....My students went right out with the army. They pointed out PKI members. The army shot them on the spot along

with their whole family: women children. It was horrible.....The head that belonged to the school principal, a PKI member, was stuck on a pole and paraded among his former pupils” [Extracts]

I acknowledge that the Western press did not report the holocaust in Indonesia as fully as some might have expected. There were however several reasons for this, and it was not simply, or even at all that Indonesians were killing Indonesians in a far away land. As Robert Cribb has noted <sup>24</sup>: “We know surprisingly little about the massacres which followed the 1965 coup attempt. There were many reasons for this shortage of information. First, there were relatively few journalists or academics in Indonesia at the time, and those who were present often depended on the military for access to sources and stories. Travel was difficult and often dangerous.” It took some considerable time for the full scale and extent of the killings to be known, even within Indonesia itself, not least because the bulk of the slaughter seems to have been carried out by civilian gangs rather than the Army itself.

### **The Gilchrist “Letter”**

More controversial by far, both then and now, was what has been christened the “Gilchrist letter” which featured on several occasions during Subandrio’s trial after his arrest in the spring of 1966. The “letter” was in fact a telegram written on a foolscap draft telegram form at the time in use by the Foreign Office and British diplomatic missions overseas. This was however the only genuine feature of the document <sup>25</sup>. Everything else about the telegram was phoney. I reproduce the text below, keeping as close as possible to the original format, spelling and punctuation:

TOP SECRET – PERSONAL

Addressed to FOREIGN OFFICE, FOR SIR HAROLD CACCIA

March 24, 1965

I discussed with the American Ambassador the questions set out in your No. 67786/65. The Ambassador agreed in principal with our position but asked for time to investigate certain aspects of the matter.

To my question on the possible influence of Bunker’s visit to ~~Jakarta~~, the Ambassador stated that he saw no chance of improving the situation, and that there was therefore no

reason for changing our joint plans. On the contrary, the visit of the U.S. President's personal envoy would give us more time to prepare the operation *in the utmost detail*. The Ambassador felt that further measures were necessary to bring our efforts into closer alignment. In this connection, he said that it would be useful to impress on our local army friends that extreme care *discipline* and coordination of action were essential for the success of the enterprise.

I promised to take all necessary measures. I will report my own views personally in due course.

## GILCHRIST

Note: words in *italics* were handwritten insertions in ink, the words struck through "~~to Jakarta~~" were also in ink. The handwriting was not Gilchrist's.

It is simply not credible that Gilchrist, who was a purist in style, could have used such turgid language which reflected the kind of jargon current in Indonesian political pronouncements at the time, heavily influenced by Soviet "socialist" formulations. There are two glaring mistakes – "in principal" instead of "in principle" and "Jakarta" instead of "Djakarta" which was the spelling then in vogue until several years later. The punctuation is weak. "American Ambassador" might have been used once, and any subsequent references would have been to "Jones". "Bunker" would have been used throughout, and the second reference would never have been to "the U.S. President's personal envoy" which was clearly inserted that the reader should know who Bunker was.

Technically, the draft is in almost every detail contrary to Foreign Office practice at the time. The telegram would have been marked "Personal for P.U.S" [Permanent Under-Secretary of State] at the top of the main body of the text, and not in the space "addressed to.....". Sir Harold Caccia's name would not have appeared at all. The telegram would have been given a sequence number by the transmitting officer, who would have filled in various transmission boxes in ink. The paragraphs would have been numbered and the first word inset. There would have been a space of one line between each paragraph. The authorising officer would have initialled the telegram, not typed "GILCHRIST". After "Personal for PUS", the telegram would have opened

with a reference such as “Your Tel. No. 67786/65 : Invasion Plans” – except that this alleged reference is not a known Foreign Office sequence.

The Foreign Office sent to overseas posts some four pages of guidance <sup>26</sup> pointing out how such a telegram could not possibly have issued from the British Embassy in “Djakarta” (as it was then spelt). It was, in short, a very clumsy and blatant forgery.

However, it was not the only one. Gilchrist reported on 22 September 1965 to the Foreign Office <sup>27</sup> that when a German journalist had interviewed Sukarno that week, the latter “referred three times to letters which he had been brought, signed by ‘Gilchrist’, which left no doubt whatsoever of Britain’s intentions [to encircle Indonesia]”. A compilation of the forged “Gilchrist” letters fed by Dr Subandrio to Sukarno would indeed now be a collector’s item.

### **“Our local army friends”**

A phrase which has attracted particular attention is “our local army friends”. At his trial, Subandrio (who was subjected to remorseless sarcasm about the genuineness of the “letter”) claimed <sup>28</sup> that it had been found in the mountain hill resort of one Bill Palmer, a US film magnate. Do remember that we are talking here not of a carbon copy or photo-copy, but of the top copy of the telegram, which would only have been filed among the Top Secret archives of the Embassy, certainly not deposited for safe keeping with a US film magnate in his mountain retreat. Subandrio stated in court that his intelligence organisation, the BPI, had assured him that it was a genuine document and that its release “had achieved its political target of preventing the participation of ‘Malaysia’ in the [Second] Afro-Asian Conference [at Algiers] and reducing rumours about the coup planned by the ‘Council of Generals’”. Asked what might have been meant by the phrase “our local army friends”, Subandrio initially suggested <sup>29</sup> that what was meant was not the “Council of Generals” but “outlaw gangs armed by the British, like the Andi Sele gang in South Sulawesi”. However, under cross-examination, he finally agreed that “people could associate it with the ‘Council of Generals’” of whose existence his Army Prosecutors denied all knowledge. The intention of the Prosecutors seems to have been to implicate Subandrio in the creation of the story about alleged plans for a coup by a “Council of Generals”.

It should be noted that the first objective mentioned by Subandrio, that of preventing Malaysia's participation in the Afro-Asian Conference, was successfully achieved, and Indonesia had an open and uncontested forum at the Conference to put across its policies unopposed by Malaysia.

There seems little doubt that this was the principal objective of the forgery, and it enjoyed a measure of short-term success.

Czechoslovak agent Vladislav Bitman who defected to the US in 1968 subsequently claimed <sup>30</sup> that his agency had forged the "letter" which first appeared in the influential Cairo newspaper *Al Ahrām* on 5 July 1965. The newspaper explained that Subandrio had given them the letter when he was in Cairo, saying that he intended to produce the document at the Second Afro-Asian Conference in Algiers, but as the conference had been postponed "it had been decided to publish it in Cairo so that people and public opinion should know that the Indonesian attitude towards Malaysia is purely defensive in character, and so that the public should know the real purpose of the British bases in Singapore and Malaysia." *Al Ahrām* went on to report that another secret document concerning operational matters which were to be carried out by the British and supported by Washington had been seized. (I need hardly add that this second alleged "document" never saw the light of day.)

The Indonesian Chargé d'Affaires Mr Suryo di Puro was summoned to the Foreign Office on 9 July 1965, told in no uncertain terms that the telegram was "a palpable and clumsy forgery designed to misrepresent and discredit Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the United States of America" <sup>31</sup> and asked whether the Indonesian Foreign Minister (Subandrio) had in fact given currency to the forgery, or whether the Indonesian Government wished to deny their Foreign Minister's responsibility for this episode. Di Puro undertook to obtain a report from his Government, but though reminded by the Foreign Office, no such report was ever provided. The Foreign Office also issued a statement to the press.

### **Fiction preferred to fact**

I find it curious that, although there are extensive papers about this blatant forgery, not only in the UK Public Record Office but also in the US National Archives and Records Administration, there are those pundits on Indonesian affairs who still hanker after the notion that the "letter" is

genuine. In *Britain's Secret Propaganda War 1948 – 1977*, the authors reproduce <sup>32</sup> what they describe as the “crucial sentence” of the telegram “hinting that the British were aware of Indonesian Army intentions” to seize power. However, the “genuine” text of the forgery reads (see above):

“In this connection, he [US Ambassador Howard Jones] said that it would be useful to impress again on our local army friends that extreme care discipline and coordination of action are essential for the success of the enterprise.”

This now appears as:

“It would be as well to emphasize once more to our local friends in the army that the strictest caution, discipline and co-ordination are essential to the success of the enterprise.”

An attempt has clearly been made to “improve” the original version of the forgery by adding a little punctuation and giving it a flavour closer to Whitehall English. I do not know of course from where the authors derived their version of this particular sentence, but they go on to claim that, according to Carmel Budjardjo <sup>33</sup>, Gilchrist had written to an Indian academic confirming its authenticity. Gilchrist indeed seems to have written to one Nawaz B Mody, then a Ph.D. student at Bombay University, on 28 March 1997 (the text of the main part of Gilchrist’s letter is reproduced <sup>34</sup> in *The Gestapu Coup* by Paul H Salim), but saying in essence what I have stated above, namely that there were two letters, one the palpably false forgery, which was widely leaked, and the other the letter with “uncomplimentary remarks about Sukarno” [the reference is to the “cornered rat” letter mentioned previously], which was genuine, but has never seen the light of day.

There seems to be something of a self-perpetuating myth about the number of documents relating to Indonesia allegedly kept from release to the public.

*The Independent* reported on 5 October 2000 that: “Documents which would reveal Britain’s secret role in Indonesian politics in the Sixties that led to ‘one of the worst mass murders of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’ and Jakarta’s eventual annexation of East Timor are being kept under lock and

key". I have no doubt that some documents have been retained, but I would be very surprised indeed if the percentage was significantly different from any other country of similar sensitivity and importance at that time. However, "retention under lock and key" is vital to the perpetuation of the mythology about "Our Bloody Coup in Indonesia", as a headline in *The Guardian* of 1 August 2001 characterised (or rather caricatured) British policy at the time.

I have to say that I find some of the remarks by the authors in their Chapter One *Indonesia: Prelude to Slaughter*<sup>35</sup> attributed to their sources nigh on incredible. For example, Political Counsellor Norman Reddaway in Singapore is stated to have told one of the authors, James Oliver, in an interview on 9 January 1996 that "Gilchrist had been supplying me in Singapore with about four top secret telegrams a week about the shortcomings of Sukarno and the immorality of confrontation.....". Now Gilchrist would have been hard put to it indeed to have provided material of Top Secret classification at all (that is, material whose unauthorised disclosure could have caused exceptionally grave damage to British interests) about Sukarno's personal peccadilloes and his well known views on confrontation, since the former was no more than open tittle-tattle on the Jakarta cocktail circuit and the latter frequently expounded in public by Sukarno whenever the opportunity arose. Indeed, during my three years as Indonesia Desk Officer in London, I do not recall handling a single communication from Gilchrist which was graded Top Secret, except of course the forged telegram, which we regraded "Unclassified". Quite simply, Ambassadors rarely have reason to send Top Secret telegrams (particularly about invasion plans!), and especially from posts where there is a serious risk that their premises might be ransacked by local mobs and their archives compromised.

## **Britain and the Untung Affair**

There was considerable suspicion at the time that Britain itself might somehow have been involved in the Untung affair. This suspicion was particularly strong among the Indonesian military. The argument was plausible enough. Britain was fed up with containing *konfrontasi* which was costly and tied down a good 100,000 military personnel in the three services. So what better solution than to contrive the elimination of the clique of generals in the General Staff (SUAD) responsible for servicing the High Command (KOTI) and so bring confrontation to an end? A Top Secret telegram<sup>36</sup> from the Foreign Office to Washington on 2 November 1965 in fact records the Americans as confirming that the US Military Attaché in Jakarta had assured

General Nasution “that we [the British] intended no offensive action [to contain confrontation] *and had not helped the PKI*” [my italics].

That the Americans had felt it necessary to pass such a denial about British support for the PKI illustrates that some Indonesians at least needed such assurance.

Nonetheless, suspicion has remained to this day. Writing in the US *Executive Intelligence Review*<sup>37</sup> of 8 June 2001, Michael Billington recounts that Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Indonesia’s best known author who spent many years in prison after 1965, wrote in a foreword to a recent book<sup>38</sup> by Greg Poulgrain on *konfrontasi* that “G30S is nothing but the metamorphosis of protracted British opposition to Sukarno’s confrontation policy.....Until now, generally the suspicion is rather one-sided towards the Americans, the CIA, while, in fact, British intelligence played a substantial role in the G30S conspiracy.....That the G30S kidnapped generals who were faithful to Sukarno indicates that the wishes of Sir Andrew Gilchrist were carried out”. However, according to Billington, the only evidence adduced for this remarkable conclusion by Indonesia’s most talented author is a “telegram” allegedly sent by Sir Andrew which said that [we have met these words before!] “I have never concealed from you my belief that a little shooting in Indonesia would be an essential preliminary to effective change”. So, the logic goes, it was Gilchrist who through these words, invariably repeated out of context by every pundit who has used them, supported the killing of the six generals, not, as Pilger has argued, the killing of several hundred thousand Indonesians. Billington goes on to say that “as is easily demonstrated, the ‘PKI coup’ story was ready-made in London and Washington, and filled the London-controlled world press almost before the event took place.” In short, G30S was all a British plot!

Billington is also critical of scholars like Peter Dale Scott<sup>39</sup> who has argued that the G30S affair might have been planned by Suharto himself in order to wipe out the Yani faction and seize power. “Not only – Billington concludes – do these accounts leave out the crucial British role in these events, but they ignore the most strategic evidence: that the governing policy faction in the United States, which *opposed* British colonial policy in the area – namely President Kennedy and Ambassador Jones – had to be eliminated *in order to drag the United States into submission to British policy.*” [italics in original]. So not only did the British mastermind the coup, we even approved the assassination of the six generals, events which (you will not be surprised) followed

“the assassination of Kennedy at the hands of British intelligence”. At least, Billington would surely agree that there was no US-UK connivance to “liquidate” Sukarno.

## **Political Analysis and Information Policy by the British and US Authorities**

Though there is some truth in Billington’s assertion that the international press tended at the time to concentrate on evidence of PKI involvement in the coup, it is important to distinguish between analysis and propaganda. Without any real justification for concluding so soon after the abortive putsch that the PKI had masterminded G30S, US Ambassador Marshall Green as early as 5 October 1965 recommended <sup>40</sup> that the US reaction should be to: “Spread the story of PKI’s guilt, treachery and brutality (this priority effort is perhaps most needed assistance we can give army if we can find way to do it without identifying it as solely or largely US effort)”. British press guidance issued unattributably by staff at the offices in Singapore of the Political Adviser to the British Far East Command and of the UK Commissioner-General for South-East Asia would likewise have been inclined to highlight PKI involvement in G30S. There was, at the time, a struggle for the soul of South East Asia in almost every country in the region, and the battle between communist and non-communist forces in Indonesia had long been predicted. This was the height of the Cold War and of the Sino-Soviet dispute.

However, as regards the objective analysis of the situation in Indonesia required by British Ministers, the assessment in London was rather different. As Political Counsellor in Singapore responsible for information affairs Norman Reddaway ruefully admitted in a Secret and Personal letter to Sir Andrew Gilchrist dated 18 July 1966: “The political side in London has been hostile most of the time, and at best neutral” <sup>41</sup> to his information activities. The “political side” in London was in essence South East Asia Department (including myself) and the Joint Malaysia-Indonesia Department, and their superintending Under-Secretaries.

In London we tended to look at times with a jaundiced eye on the activities of British representatives based in Singapore. There was a heavy military influence on the execution of policy and analysis of events. The Joint Intelligence Committee had their own quasi-independent body in Singapore known as “JICFE” [Joint Intelligence Committee – Far East] which produced their own intelligence assessments. These were circulated to certain other overseas posts, at times to the chagrin of the London-based JIC which generally had access to wider intelligence

and utilised more experienced analysts. On the whole, we downplayed the JICFE product which we regarded as an unwelcome rival. But it was to be a few years yet before JICFE came to an end.

After the events of 1 - 3 October 1965, I drafted a "Guidance Telegram" <sup>42</sup> which was sent to the principal Foreign Office and Commonwealth Office posts on 4 October 1965. In a crisis the Foreign Office does not rely solely, or even mainly on reporting from its diplomatic mission. Only too frequently our missions have, as with the G30S affair, no inkling that a coup is being planned, and restrictions on movement may well limit the scope and depth of their reporting. In the Foreign Office I would have relied as much on my own common sense and intuition, press reports from the Indonesian News Agency ANTARA and local newspapers, radio broadcasts monitored by the FBIS/BBC Monitoring Service (an invaluable service), reports copied to the US Embassy and Australian High Commission in London and passed to us by our local contacts, and secret intelligence from various sources generally not available to our Embassy in Jakarta. Indeed, in a crisis situation, the Foreign Office is likely to have a much better picture of what is happening than the man on the spot, invaluable as his contribution may be. It was on this broader basis that I concluded in the Guidance Telegram that:

"Some Communists seem to have supported Untung, but none of the principal leaders was directly involved and the Indonesian Communist Party as such has not committed itself (although the Party newspaper initially supported Untung). Our preliminary guess is that Untung and his collaborators were adventurers who may well have been instigated and used by the Communists, but that the attempted revolt took place without direct communist participation and perhaps contrary to their advice".

In retrospect, I think that I was not too far off the mark. I am not wholly persuaded by that perceptive study <sup>43</sup> in 1971 by Benedict Anderson and Ruth McVey which went even further than I did and concluded that such elements of the PKI as had been involved had possibly been duped into co-operation in order to ensnare the PKI on the side of the plotters. My view today is that there is still reliable evidence of significant, low-level support by members of PKI dominated trade unions affiliated to the PKI controlled SOBSI (Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia – All Indonesia Trade Union Federation) who assisted in the take-over of the telegraph office and both the central and main suburban telephone exchanges in Jakarta, the radio station,

possibly the central bank and other buildings around Merdeka Square as well as blocking trains into Jakarta, and also some involvement by PKI affiliated associations like Pemuda Rakjat (Youth Movement) and Gerwani (Women's Organisation) at Halim Airbase.

As a result of the progressive elimination of the PKI after 1 October 1965 as a serious factor in Indonesian political life, I think that many analysts have forgotten how powerful and influential the PKI were at the time, and as a result of the PKI's subsequent absence from the scene have tended to discount their involvement – a case of out of sight, out of mind.

It is possible, indeed probable that PKI leaders had some inkling that a "Palace coup" was afoot. After all, the military units which Untung and his co-conspirators were able to call on would have included numerous PKI supporters and indeed PKI agents who would undoubtedly have reported back to their PKI cells. Controversy surrounds the creation by Aidit of a "Special Bureau" (Biro Khusus) created in 1964 supposedly to identify and direct members of the Armed Forces who had been recruited by the PKI or showed sympathy for the Party. A key role is said to have been played by Special Bureau agent Kamaruzaman bin Ahmed Mubaidah, generally known as "Sjam", who claimed during the trials of G30S conspirators that Aidit had in fact been personally responsible for organising the coup down to the finer details. Sjam was sentenced to death as a PKI agent in 1968, but managed to survive for another eighteen years when his luck finally ran out and he was executed, which has rather pulled the rug from under those who at one stage alleged that he had all along been working for Suharto as a double agent

Generally, the PKI leaders seem to have been taken off guard, unless it was a very clever ploy on their part to let the coup go ahead and pretend, if it all went terribly wrong, that it was none of their making (which, in the event, was precisely the line they took).

Several Trotskyist groups in Australia and the United States, drawing on confessions extracted from Politburo Members like Sudisman and Njono at their trials, nonetheless maintain that G30S was most certainly masterminded by the PKI as a "Palace coup", and they castigate the PKI for its "revisionist" adherence to the "Stalinist" line of both Beijing and Moscow and for failing to call on their three million PKI members and some ten million or more supporters in PKI controlled trade unions to come out in massive support of Untung by establishing soviets throughout the country. The "hard left" did however draw comfort from the more revolutionary zeal shown in

Central and East Java for G30S where in one or two localities like Surakarta a determined and for several days a successful endeavour was made to set up “soviets”. This was despite the endeavours by Politburo Members Aidit, Lukman and Sakirman to re-establish Party control and discipline, urging PKI organisations not to be provoked into hostile action, and issuing a totally neutral Politburo Statement on 5 October 1965 <sup>44</sup> instructing PKI cadres and sympathisers to rally to President Sukarno’s call and asserting that the Party considered the 30 September affair “to be an internal problem of the Army and the PKI does not involve itself in it.” This Politburo Statement is already a significant step back from the controversial *Harian Rakjat* editorial <sup>45</sup> of 2 October which proclaimed that “the People....are convinced of the correctness of the action taken by the 30 September Movement to preserve the revolution and the People. The sympathy and support of the People is surely on the side of the 30 September Movement.” <sup>46</sup>

Most PKI leaders were out of town on 1 October 1965. Aidit and Njono were in Jakarta, but seemingly made no contact with each other. Lukman and Sakirman were on a tour of Central Java, Peris Pardede was also out of Jakarta, while Njoto and PKI acolyte Dr Subandrio were in Medan, and I find it hard to believe that any of these (and Dr Subandrio in particular) would not have wanted to be around if a coup which they had supposedly instigated was in progress.

## **Suharto’s Role**

On balance I go along with the conclusion by Stig Aga Aandstad, following conversations with Ruth McVey, Robert Cribb and Olle Törnquist in late 1998/early 1999 <sup>47</sup>, that:

“The most widely accepted interpretation, although far from canonical, is now that Suharto, who had built up a separate power base within the army for some time behind the scenes, used the opportunity the coup presented, rather than created it, and that he did so mostly by his own means and ability, not with any significant foreign support.....The White House and State [Department] did not know him, did not trust him and feared he was too staunch a nationalist to be co-operative.”

Indeed, in US and British political intelligence assessments prior to the G30S affair, Suharto’s name is not mentioned at all as a possible successor to Sukarno. He was simply not on their radar screens. He was not even on mine in London. Suharto generally kept himself to himself,

and did not consort with foreign ambassadors or defence attachés. As Paul Gardner has commented: “Few Indonesians considered him to be a major political player.”<sup>48</sup>

Apart from the PKI leaders, it has been widely noted how many prominent Indonesians were fortuitously absent from Jakarta at the time. Beijing alone was host on 30 September 1965 to several Indonesian delegations, including the three anti-communist military Generals Sukendro, Jusuf Amir and Wilujo Puspojudo, Deputy Prime Minister Chaerul Saleh, and Chairman of the PNI (Indonesian National Party) Ali Sastoadidjojo. In short, most of Jakarta’s *prominenti* were caught totally unawares by the actions of Untung and his associates, including the entire General Staff most of whose inner circle were murdered or seized at their homes. It is particularly worthy of note that one of the murdered generals, Major-General Parman, was Director of Army Intelligence, and from all accounts very effective and very well informed.

All this only lends weight to the conviction that G30S was a rather precipitate affair carried out, as the Anderson and McVey study notes<sup>49</sup>, primarily for reasons of “resentment, ambition, puritanism and unanchored radicalism” by a small group of middle-ranking Army officers who had no understanding at all of the political ramifications of what they were undertaking.

In particular, they seemed to have no clear idea of what their next moves ought to be after their initial action against the General Staff and the seizure of certain key buildings, except to send emissaries to military, police and political leaders seeking their support for the coup, which was almost universally rejected.

It is generally held that G30S “almost succeeded” and that, but for the fortuitous escape of General Nasution, the coup would have substantially increased the PKI’s chances of seizing power in Indonesia. My common sense however tells me that there was not the remotest likelihood of the bizarrely concocted Revolutionary Council proclaimed by the coup leaders assuming the effective administration of the vast Republic of Indonesia, and that the same decision would have faced Suharto, with or without Nasution: whether to allow a PKI take-over in Indonesia which would surely have followed with Sukarno’s blessing within a matter of months if not weeks, or whether to eliminate the PKI as a political factor in Indonesian politics. I do not myself believe that Suharto would have acquiesced in the situation, if Nasution had not survived,

though if Sukarno had come out in open support for the coup, Suharto would have been faced with a very difficult decision.

## **The CIA and the Coup**

It was not only prominent Indonesians who were taken unawares. So was every diplomatic mission in Jakarta, as the reporting at the time from the US, British and Australian Embassies, now generally released into the public domain, had made abundantly clear. In Washington both the White House and State Department at the time took a grim view of what was happening <sup>50</sup>. Acting Secretary of State George Ball called Assistant Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms on 1 October 1965 to ask “if we were in a position where we can categorically deny this involvement of CIA operations in the Indonesia situation” and Helms replied “yes; that he had been in touch with Rayborn [sic - Director of Central Intelligence William Raborn] by phone and had gotten his permission to identify himself with Helms in denying it, so they are solidly lined up.”

Helms confirmed that “they [the CIA] had absolutely nothing to do with it [Untung’s putsch]”. Unless these US records are a total fabrication, they should be sufficient to scotch any notion that the CIA played any role whatsoever in the G30S affair.

The CIA have however been roundly castigated because their representative in Jakarta provided lists of names of PKI office-holders to the Indonesian Army, perhaps several thousand in all. One reason for this castigation, I suspect, is that despite the most exhaustive examination of sources, absolutely no other CIA involvement in the events surrounding G30S can be detected, and this support to the Army seems to be the only area in which the CIA might be open to criticism. The action seems to have been more a matter of local liaison than calculated policy set by Washington, but critics have taken the CIA seriously to task on the grounds that they provided information which could have lead to the deaths of PKI members and gleefully, so it is said, ticked off the names of PKI cadres as they bit the dust.

While not wishing to defend the CIA for lacking the political sense to realise that posterity would judge them harshly, I would note that information given by those concerned in the US Embassy came, as they have themselves stated, only from overt, published sources such as *Harian*

*Rakjat*, the PKI national daily. Suggestions that the CIA included in their lists names of clandestine party members and agents derived from their intelligence operations seem to me rather far fetched, and in any case when the killing really got under way down in the villages, those on the rampage did not need a CIA list to tell them who their local communists were. James Balowski, who is actively involved in support for human rights, noted in a 1999 article <sup>51</sup> that the PKI themselves had been guilty of the same error of judgement : “In an eerie replay of China in the 1920s, in February 1961 the PKI even handed the government a list of party members, their addresses, positions in the party and date of joining the party.”

I am tempted by, but ultimately find it hard to go along with Peter Dale Scott’s argument <sup>52</sup> that “by inducing, or at a minimum helping to induce, the Gestapu ‘coup’, the right in the Indonesian Army [Suharto] eliminated its rivals at the army’s center”. If by “inducing” Scott means no more than “allowing to happen” or “not preventing”, then I might still be open to persuasion. Scott does not seek to argue, as others have done, that the CIA themselves were directly involved in the G30S affair. However, as regards Suharto, it is legitimate to ask what advance knowledge he might have had of the rebellion, not least in the light of testimony during his trial and comments made after his release many years later by one of the coup leaders, Colonel Latief, who asserted that he had visited Suharto twice to warn him about the “Council of Generals” rumoured to be planning a coup against Sukarno, the first occasion two days before the G30S affair, and again on the night of the rebellion when he had reportedly contacted Suharto late at night at a Jakarta hospital where Suharto had gone with his wife Tien to sit with their then three-year old son Tommy who had badly scalded himself.

Too much has been made of Suharto’s supposed personal, indeed family links with coup leaders Untung, Latief and Supardjo, and the PKI agent “Sjam”. These links need to be interpreted in the light of Javanese cultural norms, where attendance at weddings and other family celebrations by a Military Commander should be seen more as a form of patronage and social grace rather than as evidence of close friendship or family ties.

### **Suharto’s Reticence**

Suharto has been reluctant to speak coherently about his own movements during the night of 30 September – 1 October 1965, which has led many to suppose that he must be hiding

something, which may well be true. His own version is that he was contacted early on the morning of 1 October and told that there was serious trouble, drove by himself and in his own jeep at once to KOSTRAD (Army Strategic Reserve Corps) Headquarters in Merdeka Square. Yet the early morning of 1 October 1965 was possibly not the best time for Suharto to have driven by himself into an area then generally occupied by rebel troops, and Sir Andrew Gilchrist in his Despatch dated 22 November 1965<sup>53</sup> has expressed his doubts that Suharto in fact went there so early, and believes he reached KOSTRAD HQ “in the middle of the morning and assumed full control and responsibility as from noon that day”. Gilchrist reports at length in his despatch a discussion with Major Hassanudin on General Nasution’s staff, who told Gilchrist that he had been woken at 04.00 a.m on 1 October and had visited the houses of Generals Nasution, Yani and Parman. He had then gone to KOSTRAD HQ where he found Brigadier-General Mursjid in command. They managed to contact loyal units under the command of General Adjie at Bandung through their own US supplied micro-wave link. In short, it would seem that Suharto was possibly not the first man on the scene at KOSTRAD.

Like Aidit and the other PKI leaders, I think it possible that Suharto may have heard that the “political” generals on the General Staff were to be “hailed over the coals” by Sukarno, but that as an operational commander in the mainstream of the KOTI (Supreme Operations Command) he was regarded as non-political and so not in the firing line.

In any case, KOSTRAD, of which Suharto was appointed Commander in July 1963, was a relatively new creation dependent for its military complement on units assigned to its command. In the context of *konfrontasi*, Suharto would have been closely involved in liaison and co-ordination with both territorial military units and independent commands like the RPKAD (Army Paratroop Command), and in the event this was to prove invaluable in organising support to crush the rebellion. However, from the perspective of the coup plotters, KOSTRAD in general and Suharto as an individual were clearly not thought to be of any concern or even relevance to the execution of their plans.

Suharto himself may have concluded from what Col Latief had told him that there was really nothing to worry about because Sukarno had berated the Generals before. In particular, on 29 September 1965, Sukarno is reported<sup>54</sup> to have told the Association of University Student Organisations that:

“Some people were revolutionary in the past, but now they are counter-revolutionaries. They were generals before, but now they are defenders and protectors of counter-revolutionary elements. And so we must crush them.”

This report appeared, incidentally, in *Harian Rakyat* of 1 October 1965, the national PKI daily, on the very day that six of the generals lost their lives.

Suharto would not be the first operational commander to draw some wry satisfaction that the inner clique of the General Staff, and the Minister as well, were about to be told to mend their ways, and some possibly even dismissed by their Commander-in-Chief. Indeed, apart from Yani as Army Commander and Nasution as Defence Minister, the five murdered generals in Jakarta were essentially desk-bound and included Suprpto (administration), Harjono (financial management and public relations), Parman (intelligence), Pandjaitan (logistics) and Sutojo (legal affairs).

## **Sukarno's Involvement**

My belief is that Sukarno himself may have had even greater knowledge than Suharto of what was afoot, not least because Untung was the Commander of the First Battalion of the Tjakrabirawa Regiment, the presidential bodyguard, and might indeed have been tasked by Sukarno to “invite” the generals to his Palace for a good dressing down. There is little doubt that Sukarno saw the Army as generally inimical to his political aim of securing, through his concept of NASAKOM, Indonesia's future in a socialist-oriented unitary State in which the essence of the Indonesian Revolution could be permanently enshrined. But like other great Third World leaders of the time (Nasser, Sihanouk, Nkrumah) he could not accept that, while he might well personify the aspirations of the people, his political position after so many years at the helm was bound with the passage of time to suffer erosion. As the author Pramoedya Ananta Toer wrote of Sukarno in *Time* (issue 23-30 August 1999): “He gave unity to Indonesia, dignity to the downtrodden and anxiety to the powerful, who finally brought him down.” But while territorial unity prevailed, social unity in Indonesia finally collapsed, when Indonesian turned upon Indonesian as the economy wilted, land hunger became acute and the shortage of rice became intolerable.

Sukarno's own movements during the critical days of 30 September to 1 October 1965 have been put under a microscope by analysts, but as he was never challenged to clarify his position, it is not possible to say to what extent he might have been involved in negotiations with those involved in, or close to the G30S affair. The time of his arrival at Halim Airbase, where the Generals had been taken for disposal, is uncertain. He is reported by *Antara* (Indonesian News Agency) on 14 October 1965 to have left the Presidential Palace at around 6.00 a.m. on 1 October, but if he had gone straight to Halim, he would have arrived in time to see the final moments of the murdered generals who were dumped into a well there at about 7.30 a.m.. Accordingly, the official account has him arriving at Halim at 9.30 a.m. It is not known where he went in the meantime. But then neither for that matter is it really known where Nasution went after emerging at around 6.30 a.m. from the neighbouring garden of the Iraqi Ambassador where he had taken refuge, or what actually happened to Suharto if he indeed only arrived at KOSTRAD in the middle of the morning. For all three - Sukarno, Suharto and Nasution - there would seem to be a missing two-three hours at about the same time in the early morning of 1 October. But I resist the temptation to draw any conspiratorial conclusion; the circumstances simply do not warrant this.

As soon as he had recovered his composure, Sukarno worked very rapidly to restore his position. Within 48 hours he had called a meeting of political and military leaders "to settle the 30 September incident immediately" and told the nation that he had assumed personal command of the army. He appointed General Pranoto, who was known to be acceptable to the PKI, as administrative head of the Army, while he deputized Suharto "to implement the restoration of security". Sukarno seemed however to be curiously detached from the deaths of six of his leading generals, and though he expressed his condolences to the families, did not attend their funerals on 5 October, excusing himself on grounds of security concerns. It might not be an unfair conclusion from his reaction to the coup to say that he was shocked by the deaths of his generals, but suffered a measure of remorse because he might himself unwittingly have been responsible in some way.

The Australian writer L H Palmier noted in 1968 <sup>55</sup> that Untung was "incidentally, Sukarno's adopted son" (which I have not seen confirmed elsewhere), adding the interesting snippet that, according to an unnamed Army journal (possibly General Sukendro's *Api*), Untung's coup had

in fact originally been planned for 5 October 1965 (Armed Forces Day), the precise date of the supposed coup by the “Council of Generals”. The putsch had, according to the Army journal, however been hurriedly brought forward to the night of 30 September/1 October because of suspicions voiced by officers of the West Java Siliwangi Division that Untung’s arrangements for the historical pageant on Armed Forces Day concerning seating arrangements and order of march-past seemed very strange, which led Untung to suspect that his coup plans for 5 October 1965 might have been uncovered. It is an intriguing thought that the plotters might have decided to allege that the original date for their own coup was in fact the date for the “Council of Generals” coup. This version is however to my mind rather unlikely, but an Indonesian source is quoted. (I am reminded of the circumstances of the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981.)

At all events, Untung and his co-conspirators seem to have decided, perhaps precipitately and with totally inadequate preparation, on dramatic intervention, including assassination, as a means of convincing all those, who were in the know to a greater or lesser extent, but who were sitting on the fence, including Sukarno, Suharto and the PKI, that the coup had succeeded. It might be that to some extent matters ran out of control when nervous and trigger-happy raiding parties opened fire, killing three of the Generals (Yani, Pandjaitan and Harjono) at their homes instead of bringing them alive to Halim Airbase. However, the decision by the coup plotters to murder the three other Generals who were still alive and General Nasution’s aide de camp can leave little doubt that the plotters were prepared to resort to extreme measures.

However, the indecisive course of the putsch after the shocking murder of the Generals quickly induced Sukarno to withdraw his support, the PKI to deny any involvement in what they declared to be “an internal affair of the army” and Suharto to clamp down hard on those responsible for the murder of fellow generals with whom his relations may not have been particularly close but with whom he had been associated professionally for many years.

Indeed, I find it not credible that senior Army Officers like General Nasution, who escaped assassination, but whose six-year old daughter was accidentally killed by those who stormed his residence, General Sukendro who was one of the General Staff but happened to be in Peking at the time, General Adjie in command of the Siliwangi Division, and General Umar Wirahadikusumah in command of the Jakarta Garrison, who both responded to Suharto’s call

and helped to put down the uprising, would have rallied to support Suharto in suppressing Untung and the PKI and would have continued to do so, if there had been the slightest suspicion in their minds that Suharto had in any way been involved in planning, or even in simply taking no action to prevent the murder of the six generals.

General Adjie did however first check with Sukarno that the suppression of the rebel forces had his support. By that time Sukarno had washed his hands of his “adopted son”. Untung was subsequently reported to have been summarily tried and executed. No reports of his trial have been published, and the only information received by Western sources was that under interrogation he had been “unco-operative” and had had little to say. At his execution, his last words were said to have been “Hidup [long live] Bungkarno”. It has even been suggested that he was in fact reprieved and given a new identity. Others have advanced equally fanciful hypotheses – that Untung had all along been acting on Suharto’s instructions, that Nasution was meant to make a “near-miraculous escape”, and that the accidental death of his daughter reflected “his remorse about not taking better precautions to protect his family” <sup>56</sup> .

### **Comments by the Brother of General Yani**

Might I finally share with you a little gem of information <sup>57</sup> which I found in the Public Record Office. Michael Wilford, then British Chargé d’Affaires in Beijing, reported that on 10 October 1965 he found himself having lunch with an Indonesian professor of plant ecology who was on a lecture tour in China, and who had encouraged a number of his students to study in the UK. The Indonesian turned out to be the brother of General Yani, who had been assassinated only nine days previously. From cautious conversation, Wilford found that his brother had been informed of Yani’s death. However, his brother’s reaction was highly indicative. Wilford reported: “He [Yani’s brother] did not blame the PKI as such, however, but said that it was the work of a wild element in the PKI led by a Minister in the Government [whose name he could not recall off-hand – it could have been either Lukman or Njoto]. The PKI was, according to Yani’s brother, not united, but divided into factions. He said that Aidit was a personal friend of his and that he did not believe that he was in any way involved in the coup.....It was a group of wild men.”

I find this explanation by someone closely affected by the tragedy of considerable interest. It has been only too easy to see the PKI as a monolithic organisation and to suppose that there could

be no involvement of the PKI without approval from the top. The Airgram A-300 of 22 October 1965 from the US Embassy expressed the view <sup>58</sup> on Page 22 that “Communist youth do not undertake kidnappings and killings and communist union members do not block railways and close telephone exchanges without the knowledge of the Central Committee”. When I saw these comments in 1965, I annotated this in writing “Not conclusive: in Indonesia they might” and starred the phrase “youth” with the comment “i.e. a pretty wild lot who might be in the coup against the advice of ‘conservative’ PKI CC Members”. It would seem that General Yani’s brother and I were thinking on the same lines at about the same time.

## **The Search for the Truth**

I have touched only fleetingly above on the issue of the British response to *konfrontasi* during the years 1963-1966, which would be a study in itself. It might be that, through a more sensitive handling of Indonesian concerns, whether imagined or real, *konfrontasi* might have been avoided. However, the economic impact of *konfrontasi* within Indonesia undoubtedly contributed to the growing crisis evident to anyone concerned with Indonesian affairs in the early 1960s, and it is more likely than not that at some point there would have been a showdown between communist and non-communist forces.

The failure of the PKI to establish a military position for themselves, despite their penetration of the Armed Forces and their attempts to build up a “Fifth Force” of armed workers and peasants, the unwieldy size of their Party and Trade Union memberships, the fact that PKI Ministers were invariably Ministers without Portfolio without departmental responsibilities, and the lack of effective revolutionary organisation and control probably meant that the PKI were doomed in almost any circumstances in any trial of strength with the Army at that time.

In assessing the importance of the 30 September affair (which was a misnomer because the action all happened on 1 October), perhaps too much effort has been devoted by analysts in trying to decide who masterminded the rebellion. The notion that the putsch was designed to forestall a takeover by a CIA sponsored “Council of Generals” is hard to believe. Stories about CIA sponsored plots were regularly touted in Jakarta, while rumours about the “Council of Generals”, which was little more than a euphemism for the General Staff (SUAD), were common knowledge for some weeks. If the Generals had been planning to launch such a move on 5

October 1965, they would not all have been caught asleep at home less than a week before the grand event. Coups which are the subject of market-place and cocktail circuit gossip can almost be guaranteed not to be genuine, and certainly not to take place.

The evidence suggests that numerous groups and individuals, except the unfortunate General Staff, had some advance knowledge of the coup, to a greater or lesser extent.

However, the evidence points to Untung and a small group of close associates as deciding the crucial timing and very likely being responsible for the ruthless nature of its execution, much to the surprise of everyone else who had some general knowledge or inkling that a move was being planned at least to reduce the political clout of the Generals.

This is probably about as far as we can go in clarifying the background to the coup, and the explanation is broadly consistent with the conclusions of the Anderson and McVey study in 1971. Indeed, the main nuance I would add to their conclusions is that the low level participation of "wild" communist elements was probably more deliberate and conscious than the study suggested and that foreknowledge by Suharto that something was afoot is more than likely.

The progress of events between 1 October 1965 and the surrender of effective power by Sukarno on 11 March 1966 continued to reflect a struggle between two political tendencies, and indeed two administrations in Indonesia, with Suharto gradually assuming the upper hand, despite a determined rear-guard action by Sukarno to maintain his dream of NASAKOM and the position of the left-wing in Indonesian politics and society, even after the massacre of some 2-300,000 PKI supporters and possibly as many other unfortunates caught up in the religious and political upheavals of the time.

It has become fashionable nowadays to indict Suharto for major complicity in the Untung affair, allegedly staged so that he could assume political control. However the evidence for this to my mind is very thin, and I suspect that it has been encouraged to a large extent by Suharto's fall from grace and power. As the US Embassy Airgram A-300 of 22 October 1965 commented <sup>59</sup> on page 12:

“It is unlikely that we shall ever know the full facts of the 30 September affair. The maxim ‘the truth will out’ has never had much validity in Indonesia.....As Sukarno works towards a ‘political solution’, the process of obfuscation will speed up.”

This has indeed been the case. The reports of such trials of PKI *prominenti* as were held are of very little value in throwing light on what actually took place, and our best sources remain contemporary reports of the events which took place on 1 October 1965 and in the immediate aftermath.

For those with easy access to the Public Record Office in Kew, London, I would recommend a review of the reports from the British Embassy in Jakarta concerning the Untung Affair on Files FO 371/180316-20. In addition, two documents on File 180317 from non-British sources merit particular attention and have a wealth of information about events at the crucial times immediately following the abortive putsch on 1 October 1965:

Australian Embassy Political Savingram № 51 Secret of 8 October 1965 Folios 24-40

US Embassy Airgram № A-300 Secret of 22 October 1965 Folios 99-144

It is unfortunate, but a sad reality that present day assessments of these events tend to reflect more the ideological platforms of individual pundits, some of whom seem to be professionally or psychologically immune to logic, rather than a plausible, reasoned and objective analysis of such facts as are known.

In particular, a failure to consult original documents or even to analyse them sensibly has resulted in mischievous distortion of the truth, at times transmitted uncritically from pundit to pundit.

The CIA and the US administration then in place have come in for ritual pounding for orchestrating the bloodbath, though the evidence suggests that what they primarily orchestrated was the economic recovery of a shattered Indonesian economy. Indeed, the first formal meeting between US Ambassador Marshall Green and Suharto did not take place until 26 May 1966<sup>60</sup>, nearly eight months after the suppression of the coup, which is strong evidence of a lack, if not

remarkable absence of US-Indonesian co-operation at senior political level at the time. Britain too has had to contend with some pretty wild allegations, often based on spurious documentation, selective and sensationalist quotation out of context and the pointedly false interpretation of letters and reports.

This paper is intended not so much to provide a definitive interpretation of events, though a plausible explanation of the Untung affair and of some aspects of British relations with Indonesia is attempted, but rather to stimulate renewed discussion of this important period of recent Indonesian history and to open up new insights on the basis of a re-assessment of original documents and an examination of some new sources of information.

### Notes:

1. NEKOLIM – neo-colonialism, colonialism and imperialism; NASAKOM – nationalism, religion and communism; NEFO – newly emerging forces; OLDEFO – old established forces
2. John Pilger, *Distant Voices*, Vintage 1992, Chapter V “Cambodia”, reprinted and expanded 1994, Chapter IX
3. GESTAPU – or Gerakan September Tigahpuluh (“30 September Movement”) abbreviated to G30S/PKI, if you believe the PKI masterminded the failed coup, or G30S if you believe that the PKI did not. The acronym was created by the Army, possibly because of its flavour of “GESTAPO”, and won out against attempts by Sukarno to popularize GESTOK (“1 October Movement”)
4. Roland Challis, *Shadow of a Revolution - Indonesia and the Generals*, Sutton Publishing 2001
5. Paul Lashmar and James Oliver, *Britain's Secret Propaganda War 1948 – 1977*, Sutton Publishing 1998
6. William Blum, *The CIA : A Forgotten History* ZED Books 1986, reprinted and expanded in *Killing Hope : US Military and CIA Interventions since World War II*, Common Courage Press 1995
7. Stig Aga Aanstad “Surrendering to Symbols : United States Policy towards Indonesia 1961-1965” [folk/uio/no/stigaa/oppgaver/conclusion.html](http://folk.uio.no/stigaa/oppgaver/conclusion.html) (copy held by author)
8. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1961-63 [FRUS] XXIII* Folios 262, 265 and 266
9. *Plan of Action for Indonesia* SEA 61-66 NSAM 179, Box 22, Thomson Papers, JFK Library
10. Public Record Office [PRO] PREM 11/4870 Folio 139 4 October 1963
11. CIA Memorandum 18 June 1962 Declassified Documents Reference System (Arlington, Virginia) 1975 Volume Document 240A (copy held by author)
12. A translation of the *Kompas Minggu* article may be found in the *TAPOL Bulletin* № 41-42 November 1980 (copy held by author)
13. Benedict R Anderson and Ruth T McVey, *A preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965, Coup*, Cornell University 1971, p 81 Note 33: “The case for October 22 as the date of Aidit’s death seems strengthened by the marked increase in tension in Central Java at that time.”
14. James Balowski *How PKI Strategy sowed Illusions* available in October 2001 on [jinx.sistm.edu.au/~greenlft/1999/382/382p14.htm](http://jinx.sistm.edu.au/~greenlft/1999/382/382p14.htm) (copy held by author)
15. PRO File PREM 13/2718 Top Secret Telegram Foreign Office to Washington dated 4 December 1965

16. The Letter of Authority granted by Sukarno on 11 March 1966 to Suharto was formally endorsed by the Indonesian Parliament two months later. The letter is known as the "Surat Perintah Sebelas Maret" or Supersemar
17. Letter reference 1011/65 dated 5 October 1965 from Ambassador Gilchrist to E.H.Peck in the Foreign Office, Confidential, PRO File FO 371/180318 Folio 85 (copy held by author)
18. Churchill Archives Centre, Gilchrist Papers, GILC 962/13A 22 September 1963
19. Peter Dale Scott, Professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley, in *Pacific Affairs* № 59 Summer 1985 pages 239 – 264
20. Churchill Archives Centre, Gilchrist Papers, GILC 962/Dii
21. Churchill Archives Centre, Gilchrist Papers, GILC 962/13Kiii
22. Churchill Archives Centre, Gilchrist Papers, GILC 962/13C
23. Workers World Party, *Indonesia : Second Greatest Crime of the Century*, 1970 reprinted 1998, [www.workers.org/indonesia/chap1.html](http://www.workers.org/indonesia/chap1.html) (copy held by author)
24. Robert Cribb *The Indonesian Killings of 1965-66 Studies from Java to Bali* Monash University, Victoria, Australia
25. Photocopy of original in PRO FO 371/181557 (copy held by author)
26. PRO FO 371/181557, Guidance 301, 16 July 1965
27. Churchill Archives Centre, Gilchrist Papers, GILC 962/Dii
28. Churchill Archives Centre, Gilchrist Papers, GILC 962/13 H, Anantara News Agency 3 October 1966
29. ibid. Antara News Agency 3 October 1966
30. Paul Gardner, *Shared Hopes, Separate Fears : Fifty Years of US-Indonesian Relations*, 1997 pp. 205-206
31. PRO FO 371/181557, Guidance 300, 9 July 1965
32. Reference at Note 5 above
33. Carmel Budjardjo, *Surviving Indonesia's Gulag*, Cassell London 1996, p 59
34. Paul H Salim *The Gestapu "Coup"*, [www.isnet/~djoko/G30S/Salim02.html](http://www.isnet/~djoko/G30S/Salim02.html) (copy held by author)
35. Reference at Note 5 above
36. PRO FO 371/181456
37. Michael O Billington, *Attempt to Break Up Sukarno : British Policy of 40 Years*, Executive Intelligence Review, 8 June 2001
38. Greg Poulgrain – *The Genesis of Konfrontasi : Malaya, Brunei, Indonesia, 1945 – 1965* Bathurst UK : Crawford House 1998
39. Peter Dale Scott, *The United States and the Overthrow of Sukarno 1965-67*, reference at Note 18
40. FRUS 1964-68 Volume XXVI, Telegram № 868 from US Embassy Jakarta dated 5 October 1965 signed by Marshall Green US Ambassador – Page 307
41. Churchill Archives Centre, Gilchrist Papers, GILC 962/13Kiii
42. Guidance № 398 dated 4 October 1965 PRO reference FO 371/180317
43. Benedict R Anderson and Ruth T McVey *A Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965, coup in Indonesia* Cornell University 1971.
44. Text carried in the Jogjakarta daily *Ariwati Waspada*, 8 October 1965
45. Text carried in reference at Note 42, p 131
46. It is possible that *Harian Rakjat* of 2 October 1965, which may have been printed and even distributed on 1 October, was allowed to appear after the military clamp-down in Jakarta. Some suggest that the text may have been doctored or even fabricated by the Army in order to incriminate the PKI.
47. Reference at Note 7
48. Reference at Note 28
49. Reference at Note 42, p 8

50. FRUS 1964-68 Volume XXVI, p 300
51. Reference at Note 14
52. Reference at Note 18
53. Churchill Archives Centre, Gilchrist Papers, GILC 962/13/C
54. PRO FO 371/180317
55. Churchill Archives Centre, Gilchrist Papers, GILC 962/13/Kii
56. David Johnson *GESTAPU : The CIA's "Track Two" in Indonesia* 1976 reprinted 1995 [www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/54b/033.html](http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/54b/033.html) (copy held by author)
57. PRO FO 371/180321
58. *ibid.*
59. *ibid.*
60. FRUS 1964-1968 p 431

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