

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE INDONESIAN "COUP"

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In the early hours of October 1st, 1965, six senior generals, including the commander of the Army, Lt. Gen. Yani, were abducted and murdered at the Halim Air Force Base on the outskirts of Djakarta. Meanwhile rebel troops occupied Djakarta's Freedom Square enabling them to control the President's palace, the telecommunications center and the radio station. An announcement was broadcast which said that the "September 30th Movement," headed by Lt. Col. Untung, had arrested members of the CIA-sponsored "Council of Generals" which had been planning a coup against President Sukarno. In Central Java a similar "coup" was carried out against the commander of the Army's Diponegoro Division, Brig. Gen. Surjosumpeno.

The "coup attempt" in Djakarta had failed by the evening of October 1st. Although President Sukarno had moved to the Halim base, he refused to commit himself in favor of the rebels. Meanwhile Maj. Gen. Suharto mobilized forces to retake Halim. By the time that Suharto's troops had taken control of the base shortly after dawn on the 2nd, President Sukarno, Untung and his associates as well as the PKI chairman, Aidit, had all left. In Central Java, Brig. Gen. Surjosumpeno reoccupied his headquarters in Semarang on October 2nd but his authority was not fully reestablished until three weeks later when reinforcements of elite troops arrived from Djakarta. These troops not only restored Surjosumpeno's authority but also set off the massacres which eliminated the PKI as a political force in Indonesia.

What was the "September 30th Movement"? Three main interpretations have been put forward. According to the first, it was, as it claimed to be, a movement of military officers who were dissatisfied with the army leadership. Secondly, it has been argued by the Indonesian Army that the whole affair was masterminded by the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party). The third interpretation suggests a partnership between dissident officers and the PKI leaders.

Initially the PKI was linked to the coup attempt through a number of circumstances. It was discovered that Aidit had been present at the Halim base on October 1st and that members of communist mass organizations, such as Gerwani (Gerakan Wanita Indonesia--Indonesian Women's Movement) and Pemuda Rakjat (People's Youth), had been present at the murder and burial of the generals. The PKI had also given public support to the "September 30th Movement." In Central Java, the PKI mayor of Solo had issued a statement in support of Untung, and on the 2nd a PKI-led demonstration was held in Jogjakarta, while in Djakarta the PKI newspaper, *Harian Rakjat*, published an editorial praising Untung. These early indications of PKI involvement and support were followed by the "confession" of the PKI Politburo member, Njono, which was published early in December and the "confession" of Aidit, allegedly extracted before he was shot, which appeared in the Japanese press in February, 1966. In these "confessions" both admitted that the PKI had

played a major role in organizing the coup attempt. It was on evidence of this sort that the Army's case was originally built.

In January, 1966, two scholars at Cornell University, Benedict R. Anderson and Ruth T. McVey, produced unpublished papers (jointly known as the "Cornell Paper") in which they put forward an alternative hypothesis which they felt conformed with all the facts that had been made known at that time.¹ They argued that the coup attempt was an "internal army affair" in which discontented and frustrated colonels from the Diponegoro Division in Central Java revolted against the generals in the army leadership who had been corrupted by the flesh-pots of Jakarta. They argued that the PKI had no motive for participating in a coup attempt. It had been making great gains under the existing system so its best strategy was to maintain the status quo rather than upset it by supporting a coup. Thus the involvement of the PKI was incidental. They hypothesized that Aidit had been taken to Halim firstly to prevent the PKI from exploiting the situation and secondly as a means of putting pressure on the President to support the movement. The utilization of Pemuda Rakjat and Gerwani members was intended to supplement the very small forces that the movement leaders had under their command in Djakarta. These PKI supporters were being trained at Halim at that time as part of the Air Force's preparations for the creation of a "fifth force,"² so it was not the PKI that arranged for their participation but certain Air Force officers. PKI support for the coup attempt in Central Java and in *Harian Rakjat* was dismissed as not proving or even indicating PKI involvement in the abduction of the generals. The authority of the Njono "confession" (which Njono himself withdrew during his trial in February, 1966) was doubted because of a number of blatant inaccuracies, such as references to Politburo meetings attended by Aidit and Njoto in July, when in fact both were abroad during that month, and Njono's apparent confusion as to who were the members of the Politburo. As for the Aidit "confession," which appeared after the Cornell Paper had been prepared, it is certain that its authenticity would not have been accepted by the authors.³

The view that the PKI took no part in the planning of the coup attempt was seriously challenged when important PKI leaders appeared before the Mahmillub (Mahkamah Militer Luar Biasa--Extraordinary Military Tribunal) court set up to try those alleged to have been involved.⁴

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1. The "Cornell Paper," at first distributed privately, was published in 1971 as Benedict R. Anderson and Ruth T. McVey, A Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965, Coup in Indonesia (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project).
 2. In January, 1965, the PKI had proposed the formation of a "fifth force" of armed workers and peasants in addition to the Army, Air Force, Navy and Police. The Air Force leaders were sympathetic to the proposal, because its implementation would have provided a further counterweight to the power of the Army.
 3. Few scholars take the Aidit "confession" seriously. One exception is John O. Sutter, "Two Faces of Konfrontasi: 'Crush Malaysia' and the Gestapu," Asian Survey, Vol. VI, No. 10 (October 1966), pp. 535 and 541. The Army did not produce this "confession" as evidence in the Mahmillub trials.
 4. President Sukarno authorized Suharto to set up the Mahmillub in December, 1965. The full proceedings of the Njono, Untung, and Subandrio trials have been published by the Pusat Pendidikan Kehakiman Angkatan Darat (Army Legal Education Center). I have also used transcripts of the full proceedings of the Omar Dhani,

The trial evidence must of course be treated with caution. The Army, which conducted the trials, had already blamed the PKI as the *dalang* (shadow-play puppeteer, i.e., mastermind) behind the coup attempt and no effort was spared by the prosecutors or judges to drive this point home. Further, many witnesses may well have had reason to mislead the court and some claimed to have suffered beatings during pre-trial interrogation. However, it is too easy to dismiss the trial evidence out of hand. Important admissions were made by both communist and military figures which indicated at least PKI involvement.⁵ In particular, the testimony of PKI leaders such as the Politburo members, Sudisman and Njono, and the candidate member of the Politburo, Peris Pardede, in which their involvement in one way or another was admitted, greatly strengthened the Army's case. That these men were not merely reciting previously rehearsed "confessions" was indicated by the frequency with which they made statements that were unwelcome to the court. While they usually admitted the actions of which they were accused, they rejected the interpretations made by the prosecution. They denied that the coup had been directed against the government and justified the actions of the "September 30th Movement" on the grounds that there really had been a "Council of Generals" planning to depose Sukarno.

While the testimony of these PKI leaders at least implicated the PKI, the Army's case went much further. According to the Army, the PKI was the sole *dalang* which had initiated the planning and organization of the coup attempt.⁶ The key figure linking the PKI to the "September 30th Movement" was the head of the PKI's "Special Bureau," who was known by a number of pseudonyms, but generally referred to as Sjam. Sjam was responsible only to Aidit and his activities were unknown to most PKI leaders. The Special Bureau had the function of maintaining contact with members of the Armed Forces who were considered to be sympathetic to the PKI. When Sukarno experienced a sudden illness in August, 1965, Aidit feared that he might die or become incapacitated, in which case the Army leadership could be expected to move to consolidate its position at the expense of the PKI. In order to prevent this, he ordered Sjam to mobilize the PKI's supporters in the Armed Forces to take action against the Army leadership. Thus the PKI was responsible for the coup attempt. The military participants were mere tools in its hands.

Doubts have been cast on the Army's version on the grounds of its inherent improbability. It is hard to believe that officers holding important military positions could be manipulated so easily. Further, as the Cornell Paper suggested, it is easy to believe that these officers had reasons of their own for being dissatisfied with the Army leadership, regardless of the PKI. Thus, a third interpretation of

Sudisman, Muljono and Utomo Ramelan trials. In the cases of Supardjo, Sjam and Wirjomartono, I have relied on fairly detailed summaries of testimony given in the judgments. Many other trials have been held which I have not been able to consult.

5. This conclusion is also supported by the statements of PKI émigré groups in Europe and elsewhere. See Rex Mortimer, "Indonesia: Emigré Post-Mortems on the PKI," Australian Outlook, Vol. XXII, No. 3 (December 1968), p. 347.
6. The most complete statement of the Army's case is Nugroho Notokusanto and Ismael Saleh, The Coup Attempt of the 'September 30' Movement in Indonesia (Jakarta: Pembimbing Masa, 1968).

the "September 30th Movement" suggests that it was the outcome of cooperation between dissident officers and the PKI leaders. It seems quite possible that the military dissidents had already begun to plan their move against the Army leaders before contact was made with the PKI or, alternatively, there may have been a more or less equal partnership. So far, supporters of this interpretation have confined themselves to pointing out that this possibility remains open.⁷ In what follows I shall examine the testimony presented at the main Mahmillub trials which, despite the Army's aim to prove that the PKI was the dalang, in fact suggests that the military figures had their own motives for participating and that the original initiative arose within the Army. Given the purpose of the trials, it is only to be expected that the evidence for this interpretation is inconclusive. Nevertheless it is not unconvincing. At the same time the evidence presented at the trials overwhelmingly supports the view that the PKI was deeply involved.

The case that the PKI was consciously involved in the planning and organization of the coup attempt had to overcome a number of substantial objections. Firstly, all of the overt participants were members of the Armed Forces, mainly from the Army but also from the Air Force. No PKI members appeared to be associated with the leadership of the coup attempt. If the PKI really did play a major role, why was it so heavily disguised and what did it actually do? Secondly, apart from one PKI-led demonstration in Jogjakarta on October 2nd, the PKI completely refrained from mobilizing its mass support behind Untung's movement. If the PKI was involved, why did it fail to utilize its most effective weapon in support of the movement? Thirdly, as the Cornell Paper said, the PKI "had been doing very well by the peaceful road." Political developments in 1964 and 1965 had seemed very favorable to the PKI so why did it take the risk of initiating or supporting a movement aiming to upset favorable circumstances?

The argument that the PKI took part in the planning and organization of the coup attempt rests on evidence presented at the Mahmillub trials held in 1966, 1967, 1968 and later.⁸ PKI leaders such as Njono, Sudisman, Peris Pardede and Sjam stressed that the party really believed that there was a "Council of Generals" planning either to take over when Sukarno died or to depose him before he died. They were convinced that such a take-over would be disastrous for the PKI. When the President's health gave cause for concern in early August, the PKI's fears became acute. Thus the PKI had a pressing reason for participating in the coup attempt. However, the PKI did not have the physical resources to challenge the Army leaders in a direct confrontation. If we disregard the testimony of Njono, the picture that emerges from the testimonies of Sudisman, Peris Pardede and Sjam is that it was decided that

7. E.g., Donald Hindley, "Alirans and the Fall of the Old Order," *Indonesia*, No. 9 (April 1970), p. 35, and Rex Mortimer, "Unresolved Problems of the Indonesian Coup," *Australian Outlook*, Vol. XXV, No. 1 (April 1971), p. 99.

8. The view that the PKI was not involved in any way can only be maintained by those who completely disregard the Mahmillub trials. For example, despite dozens of volumes of Mahmillub testimony, Leslie Palmier asserted in 1971 "that the Indonesian Army has left no stone unturned in the search for material to pin responsibility for the Movement on to the PKI" but "appears to have only produced a 'confession' which Aidit is purported to have made just before he was shot." Leslie Palmier, "30th September Movement in Indonesia," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1971), p. 15.

the coup should take the form of an "internal army affair" in which dissident middle-level officers would take action against the top leadership. The PKI's role in the movement would remain hidden and the PKI's mass organizations would not be mobilized so that the impression would be created that the PKI was not involved. By disguising its role, the PKI hoped that the movement would win acceptance more easily both within the Armed Forces and from the political public in general. The movement was essentially defensive in that the aim was to protect the PKI from the "Council of Generals." There is no suggestion that the PKI aimed at taking over the government.⁹

The evidence presented at the Mahmillub trials by communist leaders clearly implicated the PKI. It was demonstrated that the PKI had a motive and that its tactic of disguising its own role was logical. However, the evidence of various witnesses at various trials did not lead to identical conclusions about the nature and extent of PKI involvement. Three main interpretations can be deduced from the evidence given by important communists. Firstly, there is the Njono version. Njono confessed that he personally had assisted the rebel officers and had arranged for members of PKI mass organizations to be trained as a reserve force, but he denied that the PKI itself was involved in any way. Secondly, according to Sudisman and Peris Pardede, the PKI leadership had decided to support the coup attempt but it was claimed that the initiative came from the "progressive officers." Thirdly, the Special Bureau chief, Sjam, gave evidence which led to the conclusion that the PKI had initiated the coup attempt and that the officers involved had been manipulated by the PKI. Thus the trials seemed to establish that at least some PKI leaders were "involved" in the coup attempt but the precise nature of that "involvement" was still subject to varying interpretations.

The first Mahmillub trial was held in February, 1966, to try Njono. Njono was a member of the PKI's Politburo and headed the Jakarta regional committee. He was also the chairman of the PKI trade union federation, SOBSI (Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia--All Indonesian Federation of Labor Unions). Njono had been captured along with other PKI members and supporters on October 3rd, 1965 but his captors had not realized who he was until the middle of November when he carelessly signed his own name instead of his pseudonym. He was then interrogated with the result that the Army was able to extract

9. Guy Pauker and Justus M. van der Kroef have put forward an "offensive" interpretation of the PKI's involvement. Earlier both had argued that the PKI was becoming the dominant influence on Sukarno's government (e.g., Guy J. Pauker, "Indonesia in 1964: Toward a 'People's Democracy'?" Asian Survey, Vol. V, No. 2 [February 1965]; Justus M. van der Kroef, "Indonesian Communism's 'Revolutionary Gymnastics'," Asian Survey, Vol. V, No. 5 [May 1965]). Thus it was difficult for them to argue that the PKI's participation was "defensive." Pauker is "inclined to believe that Aidit was preparing his own offensive against the Army leadership before the rumours about the Council of Generals spread in late May 1965." See Guy Pauker, The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Indonesia (Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation, 1969). Van der Kroef saw the coup attempt as part of "the final acceleration of the PKI's drive to power, which began almost exactly two years to the day before the September 30, 1965 coup." Van der Kroef, "'Gestapu' in Indonesia," Orbis, Vol. X, No. 2 (Summer 1966), p. 459. However there are no indications in the trial evidence that the coup attempt was the culmination of a PKI "offensive" that commenced before August, 1965. Instead the evidence suggests that it was an almost desperate defensive move.

a "confession" which was widely publicized early in December.¹⁰ In the "confession" Njono admitted that the Politburo had decided to support the "progressive officers'" plan to foil the coup planned by the "Council of Generals." He also admitted that he had been given the task of mobilizing 2,000 volunteers from PKI mass organizations to form a reserve force in support of the "progressive officers." However, during the trial he withdrew the "confession." He claimed that it had been made in an atmosphere characterized by "communist-phobia" in which communist prisoners were regularly being beaten up during interrogation.¹¹

According to Njono's story at his trial, the PKI Politburo had held three meetings in August after Aidit's return from abroad. During these meetings, three matters were raised by Aidit, firstly the illness of the President, which was considered to be extremely serious, secondly the information that the "Council of Generals" was planning to carry out a coup, and thirdly the initiative of a group of "progressive officers" who intended to take preventive action against the "Council of Generals." Aidit asked whether it was better to support the "progressive officers" in taking preventive action or to report the matter to the President and wait for his decision. At the final meeting on August 28th, Aidit suggested that the second course be taken. Thus the Politburo decided to report to the President about the danger posed by the "Council of Generals" in the expectation that he would take preventive action.¹²

However, according to Njono, the "progressive officers" decided to go ahead with their plan despite the lack of support from the PKI. Early in September, Njono was asked by the officers to help them by recruiting at least 2,000 civilian volunteers to act as a reserve force. The "progressive officers" did not meet Njono directly but sent their request through the general-secretary of Pemuda Rakjat, Sukanto, with whom they already had contact as a result of the Pemuda Rakjat's participation in the Air Force's scheme to give secret military training to civilian volunteers. The commander of Air Base Defense Troops at Halim, Major (Air Force) Sujono, who was in charge of the scheme, was also one of the "progressive officers." According to Sujono's testimony, he had commenced training programs at the Halim base partly in order to strengthen local defense of the base and partly to create a nucleus for the proposed "fifth force." The program began on July 5th. In July and August four courses were held lasting about one to two weeks with at least 200-300 participants in each course. Virtually all the participants were from PKI mass organizations such as Pemuda Rakjat, BTI (Barisan Tani Indonesia--Indonesian Peasant League), SOBSI and Gerwani, although there were also some from the left-wing nationalist party, Partindo (Partai Indonesia--Indonesian Party). In September, two more courses were held over shorter periods with many more participants. During the final course, 1,200 participants were given training for five days.¹³ Njono admitted that he had arranged for the

10. Angkatan Bersendjata (Djakarta), December 3, 1965.

11. Njono's testimony at Njono trial. Pusat Pendidikan Kehakiman Angkatan Darat, 'Gerakan 30 September.' Dihadapan Mahmillub I. Perkara Njono (Djakarta: n.p., 1966), pp. 59-60.

12. Ibid., pp. 33-37.

13. Sujono's testimony at Njono trial. Ibid., pp. 207-223.

increased numbers required in the final two courses. He decided to meet the request of the "progressive officers" although he knew that his action was in conflict with the decision of the Politburo.¹⁴

On September 28th, about 800 of the volunteers were recalled for a "refresher" course.¹⁵ They were told that they were being trained to fight against the Nekolim¹⁶ who were planning to invade Indonesia. These volunteers formed the reserve force of the "September 30th Movement." They were accommodated at Lubang Buaja, within the Halim Air Base, where the generals were later taken, killed and buried.

Thus, according to Njono's account, the PKI, as a party, had not been involved in the coup attempt. Although aware that the "progressive officers" were planning an action, the Politburo had refused to participate. However, Njono admitted that he, as an individual, had agreed to support the "progressive officers" by using his position in the PKI to recruit additional forces from PKI mass organizations for the "September 30th Movement." While Njono knew the purpose for which these forces were to be used, the recruits themselves thought that they were being trained to defend the nation against the Nekolim.

While Njono's account was consistent with the facts known at the time, its veracity can be doubted. By February, 1966, the PKI had been widely blamed for the coup attempt and great pressure was being put on President Sukarno to formally dissolve it. Thus Njono may have seen it as his duty to assume personal responsibility for the participation of PKI elements in the coup attempt in order to absolve the party. The crucial part of Njono's story was his claim that the Politburo had decided not to participate in the activities of the "progressive officers" but to report the matter directly to the President. However Njono admitted that Aidit had been deeply worried about the probability that the "Council of Generals" would carry out a coup if the President's health continued to deteriorate. Further, he admitted that Aidit had established contact with a group of dissident officers who wanted to take preventive action against the "Council of Generals." Moreover, he confessed that he, a member of the Politburo, had cooperated with the dissident officers by recruiting volunteers from PKI mass organizations to act as reserve forces. While consistent with his claim that he acted as an individual, these admissions at least suggested the likelihood of a far deeper involvement of the PKI than Njono was prepared to admit.

The story put forward by Sudisman in his trial in July, 1967, differed from that of Njono. Sudisman had been the fourth man in the PKI hierarchy after Aidit, Lukman and Njoto, and was a member of the four-man Standing Committee of the Politburo. He had been captured in December, 1966. Sudisman's account was supported by Peris Pardede, who had been a candidate member of the Politburo.

Peris Pardede had also given evidence at the Njono trial. At that trial he said that he had been invited to attend a meeting of the

14. Njono's testimony at Njono trial. Ibid., pp. 53 and 79.

15. Sujono's testimony at Untung trial. Pusat Pendidikan Kehakiman Angkatan Darat, 'Gerakan 30 September.' Dihadapan Mahmillub II. Perkara Untung (Djakarta: n.p., 1966), p. 114.

16. President Sukarno's term for neo-colonialists, colonialists and imperialists.

Politburo "a few days after the celebrations on August 17th, 1965." Aidit spoke to the meeting about his recent overseas tour which had been cut short when he heard the news of the President's illness. According to the President's doctors, the President faced two alternatives--either paralysis or death--unless he changed his style of life. Aidit considered such a change to be unlikely. After discussing the threat posed by the "Council of Generals" and the existence of the "progressive officers," Aidit said that he had been asked for his opinion by the "progressive officers" on whether to take preventive action or to wait for the "Council of Generals" to act first. Aidit told the Politburo that he personally tended to prefer taking preventive action. When he asked for their opinions, no one spoke, so Aidit asked whether the Politburo would agree to the matter being settled by the Standing Committee. When no one objected to this, the meeting closed. About ten days later Pardede asked Sudisman what the Standing Committee had decided. Sudisman replied that they had decided to support a preventive action by the "progressive officers."¹⁷

At his trial in 1967, Sudisman confirmed Pardede's account of the Politburo meeting which had handed the question over to the Standing Committee. However Sudisman was unclear on the exact date of the Politburo meeting. At one point he seemed to agree with Pardede's testimony that the Politburo had met "several days" after August 17th, while elsewhere he said that this meeting took place on August 28th. At other times he said that the Politburo meeting on August 28th had itself decided to support the "progressive officers." He admitted that he could not remember the precise dates of the meetings. Thus it would appear that the discussions reported by Pardede as taking place "several days" after August 17th may in fact have taken place on August 28th in which case Pardede's evidence directly contradicts Njono's. In any case Sudisman stated that the Standing Committee had agreed to support the plans of the "progressive officers."

Following the decision to support the "progressive officers," Sudisman said that Aidit asked Njono to recruit about 2,000 members of mass organizations to become reserve forces at the disposal of the "progressive officers." Further Sudisman was asked to send messengers to warn PKI branches in the regions to be on guard. Later in September, Sudisman sent messengers to Medan, Palembang, Banten, Central Java and East Java in order to inform the local branches of the possibility of action against the "Council of Generals." They were also to instruct the regional parties to listen continuously to news broadcasts from Djakarta and "to assist the Revolutionary Council." It was envisaged that local PKI branches would join together with other parties and groups in issuing statements or demonstrating in support of the coup attempt and the Revolutionary Council which was to be set up by the rebels. However they were not told that the PKI itself was involved in planning the action.

Thus Sudisman admitted that the PKI leadership had consciously supported the coup attempt. However, he claimed that the PKI had only assisted what was essentially a movement carried out by the "progressive officers." Moreover, he insisted that the participation of the PKI leaders in the movement did not mean that the party as a whole was involved. Reflecting on the support given to the coup attempt, Sudisman had come to the conclusion that he and the other members of the

17. Peris Pardede's testimony at Njono trial. Perkara Njono, pp. 130-134.

Politburo had been guilty of "adventurism" which "was not based on the high consciousness and convictions of the mass of the people."¹⁸ Thus, the picture presented by Sudisman was one of marginal involvement of the PKI leadership in a coup attempt that was essentially carried out by a group of Army and Air Force officers.

In March, 1967, the mysterious Kamarusaman, widely known as Sjam, was arrested. He gave evidence at the Sudisman trial in July, 1967, and faced his own trial in February and March, 1968. He had been mentioned in the earlier trials of "progressive officers" such as Untung and Sujono who alleged that he had played an important role in organizing the coup attempt. However very little was known about him until he was captured.

According to Sjam, he had first met Aidit during the revolution in Jogjakarta in 1945-1946. Later Sjam moved to Djakarta where he became an official of a trade union for harbor workers at Tandjung Priok. It was at Tandjung Priok that he met Aidit again in 1949 when Aidit was detained by police because he had traveled on a ship from China without a ticket. Using his influence as a union official, Sjam helped to have Aidit released. Aidit then persuaded him to join the PKI. Between 1952 and 1955 Sjam worked on the staff of the PKI-dominated trade union, SOBSI, and in 1957 he became Aidit's personal assistant. Later he also worked in the organization department of the PKI's secretariat. Sjam's main task was to approach members of the Armed Forces in order to win their sympathy for the PKI. He commenced this activity in 1957 when he became an informant for the intelligence section of the Djakarta garrison.

Late in 1964, the Politburo of the PKI decided to establish a Special Bureau to supervise the party's work within the Armed Forces. Sjam was appointed to head the bureau which was made directly responsible to the party chairman, Aidit. Sjam's main colleagues in the central Special Bureau were Pono and Walujo (also known as Bono). Special Bureaus were also established in the regions independently of the party branches with the result that regional party secretaries did not always know who were the Special Bureau representatives in their region. According to Sjam, by 1965 the Special Bureau's activities were "running smoothly" in only seven provinces. Of these the most successful were in Central Java where contact had been made with 250 sympathizers in the Armed Forces and in East Java with about 200 sympathizers. In West Java there were 80-100, Djakarta 40-50, North Sumatra 30-40, West Sumatra about 30 and Bali about 30.¹⁹

On August 12th, 1965, a few days after Aidit's return from abroad, Sjam was called to his house. Aidit spoke about the President's serious illness and the likelihood that the "Council of Generals" would take immediate action if he died. He told Sjam that he had obtained information about the "Council of Generals" from Sakirman, a member of the PKI's Politburo and the older brother of Maj. Gen. Parman, the head of Army Intelligence and supposedly a member of the "Council of

18. My summary of Sudisman's version is based on his testimony at his trial.

19. Sjam's trial. Mahkamah Militer Luar Biasa, Perkara Kamarusaman bin Ahmad Mubaidah (Sjam) (Djakarta, 1968-cyclostyled), p. 6.

Generals."²⁰ Aidit ordered Sjam to "review our forces" and to "prepare a movement." On the 13th, Sjam met Pono and Walujo to discuss possible participants in "a movement." They decided to approach Col. Latief, the commander of the 1st Infantry Brigade in Djakarta, Lt. Col. Untung, commander of one of the three battalions of the Tjakrabirawa palace guard in Djakarta, and Major (Air Force) Sujono, the commander of Air Base Defense Troops at the Halim Air Force base. All three agreed to join the movement. However Aidit felt that more officers should be approached so contact was made with Major Sigit, the commander of one of the battalions in Latief's Infantry Brigade, and Captain Wahjudi, who commanded an Air Defense Battalion. They also agreed to join the movement.

On September 6th, the five military conspirators met for the first time together with Sjam and Pono of the Special Bureau. They met at Wahjudi's house. Sjam spoke to the meeting about the President's illness, the "Council of Generals" and the economic difficulties faced by ordinary soldiers. It was unanimously agreed to take preventive action against the "Council of Generals." During the next few weeks meetings were held at which they assessed the forces that could be won over to their side. However, in the middle of the month both Sigit and Wahjudi withdrew apparently because they were not confident that they could successfully commit their units to the movement. Later the question was raised that there was no general among the movement leaders. As it was felt desirable to include a general, Sjam promised to contact Brig. Gen. Supardjo, commander of the Battle Command in Kalimantan. Sjam had known Supardjo since the late 1950's and regularly discussed politics with him. Through Supardjo's wife he was called to Djakarta on September 28th. He was told that the movement was about to commence and agreed to join it.

During the next three weeks the movement's plans were finalized. According to Sjam, he drew up the list of "targets." In the original list, apart from the six generals who were eventually abducted, and General Nasution, who escaped, there were also the former head of Army Intelligence, Brig. Gen. Sukendro, the former Vice President, Dr Hatta, and the Third Deputy Prime Minister, Chaerul Saleh. However Aidit removed the names of Chaerul Saleh and Hatta from the list because he wanted the action to appear limited to the Army. Sukendro escaped because he was a member of one of the Indonesian delegations in Peking to celebrate China's national day on October 1st. Sjam also said that he and Aidit prepared the decree that was issued by the "September 30th Movement," and the list of people to be appointed to the new Revolutionary Council that the movement planned to establish.²¹

The testimony of Sjam thus differed significantly in its implications from that of Sudisman. In Sudisman's version, the "progressive officers" took the initiative and were supported by the PKI. In Sjam's version, it was Aidit who took the initiative by instructing Sjam to seek out likely dissident officers to carry out the PKI's plan. Together with Aidit, Sjam prepared the list of "targets" and the statements issued by the movement. The "progressive officers" played no independent role. They were tools in the hands of the PKI.

20. Parman was one of the generals killed on October 1st. Sakirman was killed in 1966.

21. My summary of Sjam's version is based on his testimony at his own and Sudisman's trial.

Despite contradictions between the three versions, they all point to some involvement of the PKI. Even Njono, despite his denial of the involvement of the PKI as a party, confirmed that the Politburo had at least considered supporting the "progressive officers" and that he himself had in fact supported them. If the President was likely to die and the "Council of Generals" poised to swoop, as believed by Njono, it is quite credible that the PKI in fact decided to join the "progressive officers" as described by Sudisman and Peris Pardede rather than wait for the President to take action as described by Njono. It seems particularly improbable that Njono decided to help the "progressive officers" on his own initiative without informing his colleagues in the Politburo. Thus it would appear that where the Njono and Sudisman-Peris Pardede versions contradict each other, the Sudisman-Peris Pardede version is the more reliable.

The difference between Sudisman's account and that of Sjam is more difficult to resolve. Sjam's version is not so much in contradiction with Sudisman's as an extension of it. According to Sudisman, the PKI Politburo decided to assist a movement already set in motion by the "progressive officers." Sjam did not contradict this but added that it was the PKI's Special Bureau that had set the "progressive officers" in motion. Thus the crucial question concerns the degree to which the "progressive officers" acted autonomously. Were they mere agents of the PKI or did they have interests and motivations of their own?

The evidence presented to the Mahmillub trials does not in fact prove that the officers involved in the coup attempt were acting as mere agents of the PKI. However, it is shown that at least in Djakarta they were consciously acting in cooperation with some PKI members. The pattern of cooperation may well have been different in the two main centers of activity, Djakarta and Central Java. The links of the Djakarta group of officers are documented more extensively than is the case with the Central Java officers.

In Djakarta the leaders of the coup attempt were Lt. Col. Untung, Col. Latief, Major (Air Force) Sujono and Brig. Gen. Supardjo. Untung, Latief and Sujono had been involved in the planning from the beginning. It appears that Supardjo, who was stationed in Kalimantan, joined them at the last moment, although it seems certain that he had been kept well informed throughout. Untung and Latief were both former Diponegoro officers. Untung had earlier become something of a national figure when he made the first parachute landing in West Irian in 1962. In January, 1965, he left the Diponegoro division to become a battalion commander in the palace guard. Latief's Infantry Brigade had originally been part of the Diponegoro division before its transfer to Djakarta in November, 1963. Sujono, also a Javanese, was the commander of the Air Base Defense Troops at Halim with the additional task of training civilian volunteers since July, 1965. Supardjo was born in Central Java but served in the Siliwangi division of West Java. In November, 1964, he was appointed to head the Battle Command in charge of troops engaged in operations against Malaysia in Kalimantan.

At his trial, Sjam classified the officers with whom the Special Bureau had made contact into two categories, "sympathizers" and "candidate members" of the party. While the trials indicated that Untung, Latief, Sujono and Supardjo were in contact with Special Bureau members, it was not demonstrated that they were more than mere "sympathizers" who were willing to work in cooperation with the PKI to

achieve particular goals, such as the protection of President Sukarno. At his trial, Untung strongly denied allegations that he was tied to the PKI, although he admitted that some of his friends in his village in the 1950's had been communists and that he had been acquainted with some PKI members since then.²² Similarly, Supardjo denied having connections with the PKI and in fact had taken part in the crushing of the PKI revolt at Madiun in 1948. However, he admitted that he had met Sjam in 1956 during operations to suppress the Lubis coup attempt. He said that he had only renewed contact with Sjam when he heard rumors about the "Council of Generals."²³ Latief's background is much less clear, because he has never been brought to trial and was not even permitted to appear personally as a witness before the Mahmillub courts until the Pono case in January 1972, when he denied that he was a PKI member. His testimony to earlier trials was always in written form and did not provide much information about his political outlook.²⁴ Sujono's links with the PKI may have been stronger because he was in charge of the secret training of "volunteers," nearly all of whom were recruited from PKI mass organizations. But, at the same time, his antipathy toward the Army leaders was shared by many Air Force officers who had no links with the PKI. Thus, while it is of course possible that all of these officers were in fact committed supporters of the PKI, this was certainly not demonstrated in the Mahmillub trials.

Although it is not clear how close the ties were between these officers and the PKI before August, 1965, it seems established that they were prepared to work in close cooperation with representatives of the party in the preparations for the coup attempt. According to Sjam's testimony, Untung, Latief and Sujono were approached in mid-August by Pono and Walujo of the Special Bureau and agreed to join the movement. (In addition, Major Sigit and Captain Wahjudi originally joined but later withdrew.) They met as a group for the first time at Wahjudi's house on September 6th together with Sjam and Pono. The account of Untung differs from that of Sjam on the question of who took the initiative in calling the meeting, however. Untung told the court that he had heard of the plans of the "Council of Generals" to hold a coup and, as a member of the Tjakrabirawa entrusted with protecting the President, had decided to form a movement to purge the disloyal generals. He contacted Latief, and together they took the initiative of calling the meeting.²⁵ That Latief rather than Sjam or Pono had taken the initiative was suggested by Sujono's testimony that it had been Latief who invited him to the meeting.²⁶ Thus, Untung gave the impression that he and Latief were the initiators of the movement. The main difficulty with this account is that the meeting was attended by Sjam and Pono. Untung claimed that he was not acquainted

22. Untung's testimony at Untung trial. Perkara Untung, pp. 37-38, 220.

23. Supardjo's testimony at Supardjo trial. Mahkamah Militer Luar Biasa, Perkara Brig. Gen. Supardjo (Djakarta, 1968--cyclostyled).

24. W. F. Wertheim suggests that Latief was not permitted to appear in court earlier because of his meeting with Maj. Gen. Suharto on the evening before the coup attempt. W. F. Wertheim, "Suharto and the Untung Coup--The Missing Link," Journal of Contemporary Asia, Vol. I, No. 2 (Winter 1970). His appearance at the Pono trial is reported in Kompas (Djakarta), January 31, 1972.

25. Untung's testimony at Untung trial. Perkara Untung, pp. 35, 36, 55, 58.

26. Sujono at Untung trial. Ibid., p. 102.

with them before the meeting.²⁷ Unfortunately, he was not asked at the trial how Sjam and Pono happened to be present. According to Wahjudi, in whose house the meeting was held, Sjam and Pono arrived in the company of Latief.²⁸ Both Wahjudi and Sujono also claimed not to know who Sjam and Pono were.²⁹

This evidence points to several possible interpretations. Firstly, it is quite possible that Untung, Sujono and Wahjudi were lying. By February, when the trial was held, the PKI had not only been blamed for the coup attempt but also for almost all other ills in Indonesian society. Thus the officers appearing before the court had every reason to conceal their associations with the PKI. It was better to emphasize that they had acted as patriots to protect the President from the "Council of Generals" than to admit to having cooperated with the PKI. Secondly, it may have been that only Latief had close associations with the PKI. Untung said that he and Latief together took the initiative in holding the meeting. According to Sujono, it was Latief who invited him to attend the meeting, and Wahjudi said that Sjam and Pono arrived in the company of Latief. Thus it is possible that Sjam worked through Latief. Thirdly, it seems equally possible that it was Latief who took the initiative in seeking the support of the PKI through Sjam. Latief may have invited Sjam and Pono to attend the meeting that he and Untung had called. However, as Latief was not questioned in court about this meeting, his role remains something of a mystery.³⁰

Although Supardjo had been in contact with both Sjam and the other dissidents for at least some months, his active involvement in the movement seems to have commenced at the last moment. In Kalimantan he had quickly come to the conclusion that the Army leaders were "sabotaging" Sukarno's policy of confrontation. According to his testimony, he was informed about the "Council of Generals" by Latief in March, 1965. He then contacted Sjam in the hope of learning more. Although stationed in Kalimantan, he visited his family in Djakarta each month, and at the same time took the opportunity of hearing about the latest developments from Sjam. He also reported regularly to the Commander of the Air Force, Air Vice Marshal Omar Dhani, about the discontent that was growing in the Army well before the PKI's involvement commenced in August. When Sjam told him in August that the "Council of Generals" was planning a coup, Supardjo asked that he be notified if the situation in Djakarta became "critical." On September 28th he came to Djakarta because one of his children was very ill. When he met Sjam he was told that the movement against the generals was about to commence. According to his story he agreed to join them on the evening of September 29th.³¹ However, it seems likely that he had already reached an understanding with Sjam and, probably, Latief that he would support the movement.

27. Untung at Untung trial. Ibid., p. 57.

28. Wahjudi at Untung trial. Ibid., p. 78.

29. Ibid., p. 79. Sujono at Njono trial. Perkara Njono, p. 208.

30. I have not been able to consult Latief's testimony at the Pono trial except for brief newspaper reports.

31. Supardjo's testimony at Supardjo trial and Omar Dhani at Omar Dhani trial. Perkara Supardjo, and Mahkamah Militer Luar Biasa, Perkara Omar Dhani Ex. Laksamana Madya Udara dalam peristiwa (Djakarta, 1968--cyclostyled).

The evidence presented by the "progressive officers" confirms that the PKI was represented in the plot. However, it did not confirm the Army's allegation that the military officers were simply agents of the PKI. It seems quite likely that Untung and Latief had already begun talking about the need to oppose the "Council of Generals" before discussions were held with Sjam. Moreover, both Sujono and Supardjo appear to have had their own reasons for opposing a coup by the Army leadership. It is of course possible that members of the Special Bureau had indoctrinated these officers so effectively that they were prepared to carry out the wishes of the party, but it seems more likely that such indoctrination was unnecessary. If indeed it was the Special Bureau on Aidit's command which took the initiative, it seems more likely that its function was to bring the dissidents together rather than to provide them with motivation. It is also quite likely that once the PKI became involved, Sjam, acting as Aidit's agent, played a decisive role. However, the evidence of the Sjam and Untung trials does not rule out, and, in fact, in the case of the Untung trial, suggests the possibility that Latief and Untung, perhaps together with Supardjo, had already commenced their own planning when they were approached by Sjam whom they invited to join them rather than the reverse.

The latter hypothesis gains in credibility when we consider the "September 30th Movement" in Central Java. In Central Java dissident junior officers deposed commanding officers in a series of coordinated take-overs including the Diponegoro Divisional Headquarters in Semarang, two of the division's three military resorts (i.e., Salatiga and Jogjakarta) and the 6th Infantry Brigade Headquarters in Surakarta, while an attempted take-over of the third military resort at Purwokerto failed. At the divisional headquarters in Semarang, the leaders of the movement were Col. Suherman, the Head of Intelligence, Col. Marjono and Lt. Col. Usman. Following the collapse of the movement, all three fled from Semarang with their supporters. They were captured in December and summarily executed. Thus they were not given an opportunity to explain their motives and actions.

So far little evidence has been produced to show the extent and nature of their cooperation with the PKI. The small amount of information available about their backgrounds does not show that they had ties with the PKI. In the case of Suherman, his position as Head of Intelligence and the fact that he had only recently returned from a training course at Fort Worth in the USA suggest at least that no one suspected him of being a supporter of the PKI before the coup attempt. While it is possible that these officers and their associates in the district towns were all "controlled" by the PKI, no substantial evidence has appeared to indicate this.³² The only important Diponegoro officer to be tried was Major Muljono, who deposed the commander of the military resort in Jogjakarta and proclaimed himself as chairman of the local Revolutionary Council. Muljono admitted to being a supporter of the PKI, and it was shown that he had a close relationship with a PKI member, Wirjomartono, who had the task of cultivating sympathizers in the Armed Forces. However it was not demonstrated that Muljono was acting on Wirjomartono's instructions on October 1st. It was at least as likely that Muljono was taking orders from Suherman and his colleagues

32. According to Nugroho Notosusanto, "the Party controlled half of the chiefs within the Regional Military Command's General Staff." Nugroho Notosusanto and Ismael Saleh, The Coup Attempt, p. 43.

in Semarang. At the trial it was shown that Wirjomartono had sent a message to Muljono at about 3 p.m. in which Muljono was advised to support the Revolutionary Council. However it was not until about 9 p.m. that an announcement was broadcast in the name of Muljono as commander of the local "September 30th Movement." This followed a telephone call from the divisional headquarters in Semarang at 7 p.m. in which instructions were conveyed to support the Revolutionary Council.³³

The hypothesis that the officers in Central Java were acting independently of the PKI is strengthened by comparison with other regions. The coup movement had widespread and coordinated support throughout Central Java, but virtually no similar activity took place in other regions where the PKI was strong--such as East Java and North Sumatra. In the absence of evidence to show that the PKI did "control" Suherman and his colleagues, it is reasonable to believe that they were acting for their own reasons. Possibly their motivation was as described in the Cornell Paper, or they may have had more specific grievances not only against the Army leadership in Djakarta but in Central Java as well. Most likely, they shared the widespread devotion to Sukarno found among the people of Central and East Java and considered Nasution and Yani to be disloyal. It seems certain that the PKI leaders in Central Java, and especially the Special Bureau men, were aware of the discontent within the division. Naturally they had an interest in assisting the dissidents, while the dissidents had no reason to refuse their assistance. However, there is no proof that the PKI had a crucial influence on the decisions made by these officers.

What were the links between the Diponegoro dissidents and the movement in Djakarta? In the absence of satisfactory evidence one can only speculate. Both Untung and Latief were former Diponegoro officers who were personally acquainted with the dissidents in Semarang. At one time Untung had been a company commander in Suherman's battalion. After his appointment in Djakarta at the beginning of 1965, Untung made two visits to Central Java, the latter being when he accompanied the President in about August.³⁴ It seems likely that he met Suherman during this visit and discussed the question of the "Council of Generals" with him. Possibly Suherman had already decided to initiate some preventive action. On his return to Djakarta Untung would have informed Latief of the plans being laid in Semarang. Meanwhile Sjam had been ordered by Aidit to seek supporters for a "movement." It is likely that Sjam was aware of the existence of a dissident group in

33. See Muljono trial, especially Muljono's testimony and the testimony of Major Surono Hartono who made the telephone call from Semarang. Mahkamah Militer Luar Biasa, Perkara Ex-Maj. Muljono (Djakarta, 1968--cyclostyled). According to J. M. van der Kroef, "Wirjomartono's centrally directing role . . . seems overwhelmingly substantiated." J. M. van der Kroef, "Interpretations of the 1965 Indonesian Coup," Pacific Affairs, No. 4 (Winter 1970-71), p. 565. My reading of the relevant trials does not bear this out. According to Notosusanto, Wirjomartono was the "Special Bureau" leader in Jogjakarta (Nugroho Notosusanto and Ismael Saleh, The Coup Attempt, p. 45). However this does not appear to have been confirmed at the Wirjomartono trial. Wirjomartono said that he contacted Major Muljono on the instructions of Sudijono, the Jogjakarta party secretary. As the Special Bureau operated independently of the party branches, it seems highly improbable that Wirjomartono was carrying out Sjam's instructions. Rather he was acting on the information sent by Sudisman to the branches.

34. Captain Kuntjoro's testimony at Untung trial. Perkara Untung, p. 146.

Central Java, so he contacted Untung and Latief who were known to have contact with them. Thus it may be that the PKI became involved in what was originally a movement within the Diponegoro Division.

The evidence of the Mahmillub trials indicates that the purpose of the "coup attempt" was to eliminate the "hawkish" leadership of the Army, which was suspected of planning to move against both the President and the PKI. The evidence does not show that the "September 30th Movement" expected to dominate the government after October 1st, nor that the PKI was drawn into the plot with the motive of enhancing its position in the government. Rather the "coup" was a pre-emptive strike against the PKI's most dangerous opponents.³⁵ If the PKI and its military associates had expected to take over or dominate the government, the killing of the generals would not have mattered much, but as the "coup" was essentially defensive in purpose, the murders were a disastrous mistake. It seems that the news that at least some of the generals had been killed was a major factor in influencing President Sukarno not to endorse the movement. Further, the murders made it impossible for the movement to win the support or at least tolerance of the surviving Army leadership.

There are strong indications in the trial evidence that the plotters did not plan to kill the generals.³⁶ Sjam's testimony on this point is somewhat contradictory. At his own trial he said that the aim had been to arrest the generals and hand them over to the Revolutionary Council which would "investigate" their plan to hold a coup.³⁷ At the Sudisman trial, Sjam had told the same story but a few minutes later said that at a meeting held on September 29th, he, Pono, Untung, Latief and Sujono had decided to kill the generals.³⁸ Untung, at his trial, denied ordering the killing of the generals but he admitted having ordered Lt. Dul Arief, the officer in charge of the soldiers who raided the generals' homes, to make sure that none of them escaped.³⁹ A number of participants in the raids claimed that Dul Arief had ordered them to take the generals "dead or alive."⁴⁰ In the event, three of the generals, including Yani, resisted and were killed at their homes, while the others were brought alive to Lobang Buaja at Halim. According to the officer in charge at Lobang Buaja, Major (Air Force) Gatot Sukrisno, both he and Dul Arief were very agitated to find that three of the generals had already "been put to sleep." Dul Arief wanted Gatot to kill the remaining three, but Gatot insisted on sending a note to Major Sujono, who replied that they should be

35. This view is also put in Nugroho Notosusanto and Ismael Saleh, The Coup Attempt, p. 9.

36. Pauker has suggested "that somewhere down the line a political operation was turned into a crude murder plot." G. Pauker, "The Gestapu Affair of 1965," Southeast Asia, Vol. I, No. 1 (Winter 1971), pp. 55-56.

37. Sjam's testimony at Sjam trial.

38. Sjam's testimony at Sudisman trial. Mahkamah Militer Luar Biasa, Perkara Sudisman (Djakarta, 1968--cyclostyled).

39. Untung's testimony at Untung trial. Perkara Untung, p. 59.

40. See testimonies at the Untung trial. Ibid., pp. 123, 133, 135, 139.

"finished off."⁴¹ According to Sujono, he had merely transmitted Latief's order in his reply.⁴² At the Sjam trial, Sjam said that he himself had proposed that the remaining generals be shot and that the others agreed to this.⁴³

The most likely resolution to these contradictions is that during the Sudisman trial Sjam temporarily confused the date of the decision to kill the generals when he said that it was made on September 29th. It may be that on September 29th the movement leaders discussed the possibility that some of the generals might resist arrest and the risk that they might be killed. Nevertheless, it was decided to go ahead despite the risk. As the order was transmitted down from the leaders to the men, it necessarily had to be put in more concrete terms. While the leaders could airily talk of "securing" (*mengamankan*) the generals,⁴⁴ the members of the raiding parties had to know exactly what to do in the event of difficulties. While Untung ordered Dul Arief to make sure that "none escape," Dul Arief bluntly told his troops to "get them dead or alive." However, it seems that no one expected that as many as three, including Yani, would indeed be dead on arrival at Lubang Buaja. This explains the consternation of Gatot Sukrisno and Dul Arief. As leader of the troops responsible for killing the three generals, Dul Arief wanted Gatot to kill the other three so that responsibility might be shared. When Gatot's note reached the movement leaders, they apparently decided that there was now nothing to lose from killing the other three. Probably they had begun to panic on hearing that Nasution had escaped and Yani had been killed.

What might have happened if the "coup attempt" had been carried out according to plan? If the generals, including Nasution, had all been arrested and accused of plotting against the President, it is plausible to believe that the President would have endorsed the "September 30th Movement's" action. With Presidential endorsement it would have been very difficult for the remaining Army leadership to move against the dissidents. Most likely the matter would have been settled in the traditional style of *musjawarah* (consultations) leading to a compromise which weakened the "hawks" in the Army leadership without reversing its fundamentally anti-communist outlook. Possibly Sukarno would have insisted on the dismissal of Yani and some of his colleagues. However, it is unlikely that he would have been able to impose a pro-communist commander on the Army. Such an appointment would not have been accepted by the most senior officers in direct command of troops such as Suharto (Strategic Reserve Command), Umar Wirahadikusumah (Djakarta), Adjie (West Java), Basuki Rachmat (East Java) and Mokoginta (Sumatra), all of whom were strongly anti-communist. Thus the "September 30th incident" was in fact not so much a

41. Gatot Sukrisno's testimony at the Untung trial. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

42. Sujono's testimony at Untung trial. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

43. Sjam at Sjam trial.

44. Referring to an earlier plot, Anderson noted that "It must be recognized, however, that in Javanese social communication, much is commonly left unsaid, great trust being put in intuitive understanding; this pattern, while sharpening subtle sensibilities, frequently leads to confusion and misunderstanding." Benedict R. Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 396.

"coup" against the government but an attempt to force Sukarno's hand within the existing governmental structure.

In this article I have argued that the testimony presented to the Mahmillub trials is open to more than one interpretation. While the evidence that the PKI leaders were indeed deeply involved in the coup attempt seems overwhelmingly strong, conclusions commonly drawn on the basis of the trial evidence in regard to the nature of its involvement and its motives seem open to question. The trial evidence in fact suggests that it is quite likely that the idea to purge the top Army leaders originated among middle-level officers in the Diponegoro Division and their colleagues in Djakarta. The Army's claim that it was the PKI, through Sjam, which initiated the movement is not proven in the trials. The PKI's involvement only commenced when Aidit became convinced that the delicate balance of Djakarta politics was in danger of being upset by the demise of the President. While Sjam may have played a dominant role in formulating the movement's plans in Djakarta, there is little to show that the PKI's influence was substantial in Central Java. The basic aim of the movement was to arrest the generals who were believed to be plotting against the President, in the hope that he would then be able to take action against them.

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