Indonesia:
Interpreting the Coup

IN THE EARLY HOURS of October 1, 1965, a group of Indonesian army and air force officers, operating out of Halim Perdakasumah air force base on the outskirts of Djakarta, despatched small forces of soldiers to the city to seize seven senior generals of the Army's General Staff and take a number of key points in the capital. With the important exception that the Defence Minister, General Nasution, eluded his would-be captors, the operation was successful in terms of its set objectives. The six captured generals were all slain.

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The conspirators then broadcast an announcement over Djakarta Radio in the name of Lieut.-Col. Untung, commandant of a battalion of the Presidential guard, to the effect that moves in the capital had been initiated to safeguard President Sukarno and the Indonesian Revolution from a reactionary and American-influenced “Council of Generals” which was plotting a coup to overthrow the Government and its progressive policies. The generals were denounced for cosmopolitanism, neglect of their men, luxurious living and sabotage of the President’s program.¹

The military action of the plotters was strictly limited. They clearly aimed at no more than a show of strength which would remove the most obdurate opponents of the President’s radical nationalist policies and encourage him to press ahead more vigorously with his program. Later in the day, they announced the formation of a Revolutionary Council consisting of 45 army and civilian dignitaries which was to take temporary charge of the nation. (It subsequently transpired that none of those named to the Revolutionary Council had been consulted beforehand, other than those directly involved in the conspiracy.)

In the meantime, President Sukarno had arrived at Halim, summoned his available advisers to him, and begun to take stock of the situation. There seems no reason to doubt that, if circumstances had been propitious, Sukarno would not have been unduly upset by the removal of the troublesome generals (though he would have regarded the killings with disfavour) and would have capitalised on the situation in the ways desired by the plotters. As it happened, however, two developments gave him pause. The first was the escape of Nasution, an old adversary; the second, and more important, was the fact that General Suharto, commander of the Army’s strategic reserve (who was not on the plotters’ death list), had reached his headquarters and quickly taken charge of operations to put down the rebellion. Suharto bluntly ignored messages from the President aimed at blunting this purpose.

In these circumstances, the President declined to take a public stand. Suharto efficiently brought the capital under control and threatened to assault the air base. By the evening of October 1, the “coup” (as it has inaccurately been termed) was doomed, and those gathered at Halim scattered in various directions. Among those who fled was D. N. Aidit, Chairman of the Communist Party (PKI), who either went or was taken to Halim early that morning, but who from all accounts (including later trial evidence)¹

¹ These and other documents relevant to the coup appear in translation in the magazine *Indonesia*, produced by the Modern Indonesia Project, Cornell University, No. 1, April 1966.
was not in touch with Sukarno during the critical hours when the President’s support for the plot was being solicited. Aidit flew to Central Java in company with Air Force commander Omar Dhani, who, it later transpired, had given the plotters permission to use Halim as their headquarters on the previous day.

Army accomplices of the Djakarta conspirators in Central Java had launched similar actions in a number of cities in that province the same day, but these were either foiled or collapsed in the wake of the debacle in the capital. Elsewhere in the country, no overt action of any significance took place.

It is now history that the Indonesian army chiefs attributed the inspiration for the October 1 action to the PKI, and in the weeks and months following it initiated a bloody campaign which resulted in the massacre of between half a million and one million communists and suspected communists. The Party, which under Aidit’s leadership had grown to a claimed membership of 3½ million (the largest outside the communist bloc), and had represented by far the most dynamic political organisation in the country, collapsed dismally in the face of the army’s onslaught.

President Sukarno, who had for years used the agitational and organisational skills of the communists as a counterweight to army power in maintaining his undisputed political supremacy, and who over the year previous to the coup had appeared increasingly disposed to secure their acceptance as the dominant factor below him in political life, refused to disown the PKI in the wake of the coup or countenance the witch-hunt against it. But the army was no longer awed by his commanding presence, and, amidst mounting accusations by rightwing army and student radicals that he himself was implicated in the October 1 affair, Sukarno was gradually stripped of his titles and powers and eventually held as a virtual palace prisoner by the army until his death this year.

The present Indonesian regime, headed by the victor of October, General Suharto, has conducted some 200 trials of alleged principals in “Gestapu”. The PKI’s top leaders (Aidit, Lukman, Njoto), and the Divisional Staff officers in Central Java who organised the actions in that province, were not granted the benefit of trial, however, but were summarily executed upon capture. Five years after the event, a tally of political prisoners variously estimated at between 120,000 and 250,000 remain in prisons and detention camps without trial, despite pleas inside and outside Indonesia

2 “Gestapu”, as the October 1 affair is known in Indonesia, is an acronym for the Indonesian words for “September 30 Movement”, the title which the conspirators gave to their group.
(including repeated interventions by Amnesty International) that those against whom no charges are to be brought should be released.

The events of October 1, and their surrounding circumstances, are the subject of a voluminous academic and journalistic literature, but there is as yet far from being a consensus upon the mechanics of the events and the roles of various actors. The problem of untangling the skein has been complicated by various factors, including the summary deaths of some of the key figures, the crusading anti-communist atmosphere in which the trials have been conducted, the control of these trial proceedings by the army victors, the unavailability of a good deal of the evidence, the fact that accused and witnesses have been subjected to pressures ranging from long periods of incarceration under inhuman conditions to outright torture, and the fact that political considerations may have dictated the suppression of evidence bearing upon Sukarno’s role in the affair.

Two main interpretations of the coup have become widely established, though it should be added that a probable majority of scholars and responsible journalists continue to adopt an attitude of scepticism regarding both. The official Indonesian Government case, briefly, is that the PKI leadership, at Aidit’s instigation, set the coup in motion early in August when it feared the possibility of Sukarno’s imminent demise and consequent army repression against the Party. Aidit, working through a Secret PKI bureau headed by one “Sjam”, utilised army and air force officers who had been won to the Party over a period of time in order to give the operation the appearance of an internal army affair.

However, the Party tipped its hand by allowing young members of its youth (Pemuda Rakjat) and women’s (Gerwani) organisations to be used on October 1 to fill out the coup forces. These PKI activists had been undergoing weapons training at Halim for some time under the aegis of the Air Force, as part of an as yet unofficial program to establish a “Fifth Force” of armed militia—a proposal which was generally seen as designed to give the PKI some counter to the army’s overwhelmingly preponderance of armed strength, and which, while supported by the Air Force and in all likelihood Sukarno himself, was strenuously opposed by the Army chiefs.3

3 Allegations by accused and witnesses of torture receive some confirmation in the diary notes of an Indonesian interrogator—see Usumah, “War and Humanity: Notes on a Personal Experience”, Indonesia, No.9, April, 1970.

4 Air Force prominence in supporting the Fifth Force and in the coup was due to that service’s jealousy of the army, which led it to line itself up solidly with Sukarno. The President himself hinted that he was about to authorise the Fifth Force in his Independence Day address on August 17, 1965—Reach to the Stars!
Aidit is supposed to have directed the entire coup operation, with minor assistance from some other Politbureau members, but it is not claimed that any sizeable number of leading PKI personnel (let alone the lower-ranking members) were aware of what was being planned.\(^5\)

As against this interpretation, a number of close academic students of Indonesia and Indonesian communism have been strongly inclined to regard the September 30th Movement as basically what it appeared and claimed to be — that is, a conspiracy by subordinate army officers from Central Java to remove General Staff leaders who were considered to be undermining Sukarno’s policies and possibly preparing a coup to that end, and who in addition were departing from the revolutionary national traditions of the army by hobnobbing with Westerners, apeing their ways, living in luxury while their men suffered economic privations, etc.\(^6\)

Although no detailed statement of this thesis has yet been written, a considerable amount of material has been collated from primary Indonesian sources suggesting that the plot was conceived in the Divisional Staff headquarters of the Diponegoro Division, that those involved shared service grievances and were linked with one another through their service and common orientations, and that their known views were not such as to make it likely that they were instruments or dupes of the communists.

It is generally accepted that Aidit did become involved in the plot at some point, probably through the agency of “Sjam” (of whom more later), and that Sukarno may have had some inkling of what was afoot and did nothing to discourage it; but the role of Aidit is seen not as that of initiator or organiser, but as one who was drawn into an already formulated conspiracy out of sympathy with its aims and a desire to exert some control over a situation which could easily get out of hand and place the PKI in jeopardy. Needless to say, he failed in this latter object-

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\(^5\) The most detailed account of the Government case is contained in the booklet by Nugroho Notosusanto and Ismail Saleh, *The Coup Attempt of the September 30th Movement in Indonesia* (Djakarta, 1968). Among Western scholars who have endorsed this account, mention may be made of Guy J. Pauker and Justus M. Van der Kroef.

It is doubtful that other PKI leaders had any knowledge of the plot other than what was reported to them by Aidit, who obtained from them a wide mandate to use his discretion in negotiations with the army plotters.

Neither version gives credence to the plotters' allegations that a "Generals' Council" was planning an imminent coup, though there is little doubt that the army high command had drawn up contingency plans for a strike against the PKI in the event of Sukarno's sudden death or incapacitation. But, while the Government case argues that the story of the Generals' Council was a deliberate PKI concoction, others see it as one of a number of rumours of impending coup rife in Indonesia throughout 1965, which the PKI leadership was just as likely to have been misled by as to have planted. Certainly, many rightwing politicians at this time were boasting that the army leaders were ready to move against the communists at the first opportunity.

Arnold Brackman, an American journalist who has written several works on Indonesia and Southeast Asia, has entered the lists with his book, The Communist Collapse in Indonesia. Regrettably he has contributed nothing whatsoever to an elucidation of the problems of interpretation of the events of October 1. On all counts, his book is immeasurably inferior to the other listed books and articles which support the Indonesian Government's case. Indeed, were it not for the fact that he enjoys some patronage as a pundit in Establishment circles in the U.S., and that understanding of the issues involved in this episode is generally so lacking in Australia that even an authority on international relations, Professor Hedley Bull of the ANU, has reviewed this book favourably, it would be sufficient to dismiss it in very short order. As it is, however, a more substantial examination of it is called for.

The political background of the October 1965 events is of very considerable importance in obtaining any clear perspective upon what transpired. In this connection, several developments are of especial importance—the trajectory of Sukarno's anti-

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7 That Aidit did play some part in the conspiracy seems incontrovertible. Quite apart from evidence from other sources, academics who have interviewed PKI members in Indonesia and abroad have found that they all accepted Aidit's involvement: the same applies to the two major emigre PKI factions, one pro-Moscow and one pro-Peking. See Rex Mortimer, "Indonesia: Emigre Post-mortems on the PKI", Australian Outlook, Vol. 22, No. 3 (December, 1968).

8 Reports to this effect appeared in various Western press articles of the period, including those by Australian correspondent Frank Palmos.

Western and China-leaning policies after the onset of full-scale confrontation of Malaysia in September 1963; the strategy being pursued by the PKI and the reactions among the predominantly anti-communist elite and the army aroused by the political gains the Party was making; and the elements of crisis (economic, political and social) which were becoming manifest in Indonesia in 1965. It would be impossible to canvass these questions here, but it is imperative to grasp that every informed student of Indonesian affairs understood at the time — namely, that in an increasingly tense and unstable situation, it was vital to the PKI, if it was to survive and eventually succeed to power, to proceed in such a way as to give the army, its inveterate and intrinsically much more powerful enemy, no opportunity or excuse for a resort to arms.

The PKI’s position, despite its great size and popular influence, was far from being strong in itself. Operating in a pre-industrial society, where the relatively undifferentiated character of rural society gave few opportunities for marshallng a class-based movement, and where conditions did not favour resort to guerrilla warfare on the part of the communists, Aidit and his fellow PKI leaders had long drawn the conclusion that their only hope of survival and growth depended on establishing and maintaining a close protective alliance with the radical nationalist wing of the elite headed by Sukarno. This required of the Party a posture of moderation and patriotism, using organised pressure to advance their position within the policy framework laid down by Sukarno. The strategy paid off in terms of members and prestige, especially on Java, but the terms of the strategy prevented the PKI from imbuing their members and followers with a tough independent ideology and cohesion. The communists were shut in along the peaceful road, and despite the more favourable radical climate in the country from late 1963, PKI militancy was essentially limited to pressure tactics to cow opponents and push the Party’s allies into conceding it a larger place in the power constellation.

Sukarno was doing his best to assist the Party in this respect in 1965, either out of a desire to bring it to power in his own time or merely to redress the balance of power in the army’s favour. The obvious PKI fear that its patient but persistent strategy would be cut short by a violent clash with the army is one reason which has led many authorities to question the PKI’s instigation of the coup, since it amounted to playing the army’s game and moreover in circumstances where (contrary to Brackman) the forces available to the plotters on October 1 were very thin indeed.
Nothing of this complex picture is conveyed by Brackman. He is much more concerned to place the October 1 episode within a grotesquely overdrawn international context centred on the power dynamics in Southeast Asia in 1965. A man much given to apocalyptic visions, he presents the region as locked in a life-and-death struggle between the forces of democracy (the pax Americana) and “totalitarianism”, and could, with a few changes of terminology, be likened in his penchant for melodrama, to the Sukarno whom he detests so violently. He achieves his scaremongering effect by presenting Indonesia as of greater strategic importance and wealth than China (p. 12); vastly inflating the power resources of the Sino-Indonesian alliance; blowing up out of all proportion the military significance of confrontation with Malaysia; and even treating the quickly suppressed Brunei revolt of December 1962 as a major threat to Anglo-American power.

With this fanciful backdrop, Branckman is able to characterise the failure of the October 1965 coup as the collapse of “Southeast Asia’s second front” (thereby suggesting, without even establishing, a conspiratorial link with Chinese and Vietnamese “aggression”) and rank it in importance with such epochal events as the Russo-Japanese war, the Chinese revolution, Pearl Harbour, etc. Not content with this awesome recital, Brackman sweeps on with unsubstantiated claims that US intervention in Vietnam partly grew out of the situation developing in Indonesia in 1965 (p. 11) and that the Chinese Cultural Revolution was probably triggered by the failure of China’s policy towards Indonesia (pp. 151-2).

Brackman makes no serious analysis of the pre-coup situation in Indonesia, but his depiction of the PKI and its policies is grossly misleading. By selectively quoting and distorting PKI agitational demands for stern government action against corruptors and embezzlers in high places, he creates the impression that the Party was intent upon unleashing violence upon its political opponents (p. 63), whereas, as has been pointed out above, it was crucial to the PKI’s strategy that violent resolutions of political conflict be assiduously avoided. But a writer who can treat what was between 1951 and 1965 the most independent communist party in the world (along with the CPC and the Yugoslav League of Communists) as a creature of Moscow prior to 1963 can hardly be expected to appreciate these subtleties.

With regard to the coup itself, the best that can be said of his treatment of it is that it is perfunctory in the extreme. He makes no systematic analysis of the evidence, let alone examining the points of doubt or conflict in the official account. Apart from a few references to English language summaries of the trials,
Brackman's case rests almost exclusively upon interviews with intense anti-communists and anti-Sukarnoists, or upon some unnamed "unimpeachable source", "the considered judgment of thoughtful Indonesians", and the like.

Oddly, in indicting the PKI as the mastermind of the coup, Brackman does not rely at all upon the trial evidence that the army conspirators were witting tools of the PKI. It is not at all clear whether he takes for granted this allegation, the strongest part of the Government case. But in writing of Untung, who was depicted at the trials as a trained communist since 1951, Brackman suggests he was a "not especially bright" individual "of intense loyalty to Sukarno" and a "fall guy" for the communists (pp. 61-2). This if anything tends to undermine his carefully built up picture of a deep communist conspiracy.

Indeed, the only "hard" facts instanced by Brackman to sustain his thesis of PKI instigation are two: an editorial in the Party's daily, Harian Rakjat, on October 2, giving guarded support to the September 30 movement, which it termed "an internal affair of the army"; and the participation of the PKI youth in the coup operations. The first, of course, demonstrates no more than ex post facto endorsement of the events. The second is more cogent, but, unfortunately for Brackman, the trial evidence on this point is far from consistent. At Untung's trial, for instance, a series of exchanges between the State Prosecutor and Untung took place to establish the reasons why the conspirators decided not to employ the PKI trainees.10 There is a good case for concluding that the trainees were only used to cover the retreat of the coup forces in the dying stages of the affair, and that therefore their role was not in any way premeditated.

The main point which Brackman appears to want to make is that Sukarno was as fully involved in the October 1 affair as the PKI. As a pointer to the standards of his evaluations, it is worthwhile examining how he proceeds to establish this argument. As usual, he opens with a flourish: "Indonesia's President-for-life was privy to the plot", he assures his readers (p. 11). Later, it is asserted as a fact that some time between August 28 and September 14, Aidit and Sukarno conferred on the putting aside of the generals and reached agreement (p. 58). The only drawback is that there is no authority for this allegation whatsoever, and all Brackman can say of it is that it was a fact "as far as could be learned in Djakarta" (p. 58), or, somewhat more artfully, "as far as can be determined by scrupulous, independent inquiry in Djakarta in the

10 The Untung trial record: Dihadapan Mahmillub Di Djakarta II. Perkara Untung, at pp. 46-49.
spring of 1968” (p. 59). Unfortunately, as will be enlarged upon shortly, there are good grounds for questioning Mr. Brackman’s independence and scrupulousness, and the informants he names as sources of information are anything but independent.

In point of fact, when Brackman comes to the events of October 1, his penchant for dramatic display leads him inadvertently to throw doubt upon his own story. Hypothesising about Sukarno’s feelings when he heard of the seizure of the generals, Brackman asks: “Why did Sukarno go to Halim? Did he fear that the troops guarding the palace were unfriendly? Did the Untung pronouncement indicate a possible coup? Did he fear he was on the purge list? This is doubtful since the success of the movement depended on the presidential endorsement—and all concerned knew it, the Communist leadership, the ‘progressive, revolutionary’ officers, and Sukarno himself. Or did Sukarno, like MacBeth, have a vision of the bloodied generals waiting for him on the palace steps? It is doubtful if we shall ever know because it is unlikely that Sukarno can ever tell the story without compromising himself” (p. 87). Whatever these confused speculations indicate, they hardly suggest certainty in the writer’s mind that Sukarno was fully privy to the plot. To add further to the confusion, Brackman quotes Sjam, the alleged PKI secret mastermind of the plot, as saying on September 9, “If the movement meets with success, the President will surely agree to it” (p. 90). This again hardly confirms Sukarno’s prior commitment.

Professor Hedley Bull, in commenting on this book, remarked that Brackman had effectively disposed of the coup thesis advanced by the so-called “Cornell Paper”. This is a reference to a “preliminary analysis” of the October 1 affair prepared and circulated privately early in 1966 by staff and/or graduate students at the Cornell University’s Modern Indonesia Project, the world’s leading centre for the study of Indonesian politics and culture. Now it would be surprising indeed if a document drawn up before many of the presently known facts had emerged could not be faulted in some major respects. In point of fact, however, the substance of the “Cornell thesis” has if anything gained in credibility as more material has been gathered, suggesting the likelihood that the officer group involved in the coup formed an autonomous entity with no particular attachment to the PKI. The general conclusion of the “Paper”, quoted by Brackman, is as follows:

The weight of the evidence so far assembled and the (admittedly always fragile) logic of probabilities indicate that the coup of October 1, 1965, was neither the work of the PKI nor of Sukarno himself. Though both were deeply involved, it was after the coup plans were well under way. They were more the victims than the initiators of events. (p.175).
Brackman's discrediting of this thesis, which Professor Hedley Bull found so convincing, is a model of deception and distortion. On the one hand, he treats it as if it denied any complicity whatsoever on the part of Aidit and Sukarno, which it clearly does not. On the other hand, he makes play upon the comfort which the PKI leaders and Sukarno would have drawn from the Cornell Paper had they had access to it! If this is to be the standard for debate on the question, then we might as well put the late Joe McCarthy back in the umpire's seat.

Brackman makes one point of substance only in attempted refutation of the Cornell thesis. “In political terms”, he argues, “a question never answered is why the conspirators felt it necessary to proclaim and instal a ‘Revolutionary Council’, laced with Communists and fellow travellers, among others, if the event was solely ‘an internal army affair’” (p. 177). Leaving aside for the moment the issue of the composition of the Revolution Council, this is a fair comment. However, it is far from invalidating the Cornell argument, since Aidit’s involvement in the coup at a stage after its conception could well have resulted in him bringing influence to bear to give the movement a more pronounced political character.

Two fascinating aspects of the October 1 affair which have come to light in recent years are worthy of note in indicating the range of possibilities still open for further investigation of the episode. One concerns the victor of October and the present Indonesian Head of State, General Suharto himself. It has always been something of a mystery why Suharto was not on the plotters' list for capture, in view of the key post he occupied in the capital's defences, or at least why no steps were taken to neutralise his headquarters and communications. At first Djakarta official sources suggested he was marked down for capture, but was not at home on the fatal morning. Later this claim was abandoned, and replaced by the proposition that, as a relatively non-political general, he was overlooked by the plotters. The real position is otherwise, and much more intriguing. In the first place, although Suharto stood somewhat apart from the General Staff clique, he was a dedicated and active anti-communist who maintained his own intelligence network attached to his Strategic Command. Secondly, all the major coup conspirators had belonged to Suharto’s commands; in some cases, at least, they appear to have been proteges of his in the service and to have enjoyed his personal regard. (At Untung’s wedding in 1964, for instance, Suharto was an especially honoured guest.) This would go a long way towards explaining why the general was left alone on October 1, but it would also suggest that the army conspirators had more say in the operational plans than the PKI, which was unlikely to
have been unaware of Suharto's political views or his military importance. If some critics of the present Indonesian regime, such as Sukarno's former wife Dewi, have gone further and hinted that Suharto may have known more of the impending plot than he would care to admit, and turned it to his own advantage, it can only be commented that this reflects the continuing suspicion that exists between Sukarno followers and the Suharto Government.11

Since we have entered the realm of conjecture and devious intrigue, however, a final word is in order concerning the person of Aidit's reputed secret bureau head, "Sjam". At his trial, "Sjam" confessed that he had been a secret and trusted agent of Aidit's since 1951. But an equally significant piece of information, not disclosed at the trial, was that the officer who arrested "Sjam" in 1967 stated in a newspaper interview that the detainee had been an informant for a branch of army intelligence since 1959, and that, after the coup, some of his former army controllers had helped him evade capture12. Rumours out of Djakarta have it that, though Sjam was sentenced to death, he has been pensioned off in a quiet backwater. True or not, Sjam's role remains mysterious. Was he in fact the top PKI underground man, provocateur, double agent, or a shrewd self-server with an eye for the main chance? It is doubtful if we shall ever know, but the field for speculation is wide open.

Arnold Brackman forfeits whatever credibility his account of the coup might have by the lengthy catalogue of errors and distortions of fact in his book. Names are not his strong suit, and the book abounds with mistakes in relation to persons and bodies. The Indonesian communist youth league leader Sukatno is referred to throughout as Sukanto; the religious scholars' party, Nahdatul Ulama becomes Nahdatual Ulama; the Javanese town of Klaten is transformed into Klatan; PKI Central Committee member Zaelani appears as Zaelini. China's Academy of Sciences President Kuo Mo Jo as Ku Mo Jo, and even the American academic Frederick Bunnell loses the final letter of his name whenever it is cited.

Mr. Brackman may be able to lay these blemishes at the door of his printer and publisher, but he cannot escape his more serious blunders so easily. The many versions of the alleged "Council of Generals" are reduced to one, and that not the most common (pp. 40-41); the Indonesian land reform figures he quotes are partly early estimates which were later revised and partly

11 Dewi's attack on Suharto was reproduced in the Dutch newspaper, Vrij Nederland, 18/4/70.
12 Sinar Harapan, 13/3/67.
official claims that no authority takes seriously (p. 44); his version of Sukarno’s Nasakom concept betrays woeful ignorance (p. 44); contrary to his statement, the PKI’s unilateral land reform actions were initiated at the end of 1963, not the end of 1964 (p. 44); PKI leader Aidit was not a member of the 1965 Indonesian Afro-Asian delegation as claimed (p. 54); Njoto was not in Peking in early August 1965 (p. 54).

Brackman is almost unique in claiming authenticity for the patently false confession attributed to Aidit at the time of his capture (p. 111). The alleged PKI plan to seize power by 1970-71 relied on by him is again a crude forgery, which Sukarno’s Minister for Basic Industries, Chairul Saleh, was obliged to apologise for quoting (p. 130). It is a flagrant distortion to claim, as Brackman does, that the Harian Rakjat editorial of October 2 contained an endorsement of the murder of the six generals (p. 82). It is equally dishonest to state that regional branches of the PKI endorsed the coup attempt, and then to cite as evidence the only announcement of a PKI-affiliated body that did so — the East Java Pemuda Rakjat (p. 83). The completely unsubstantiated statement that the PKI planned a mass uprising to coincide with the coup (p. 89) is even contradicted by Brackman himself (p. 133). It is totally misleading to say (p. 87) that “Sukarno joined Aidit” at Halim on October 1, since all the evidence suggests that they did not meet together until the coup was defeated. The suggestion that the Revolutionary Council nominated by the coup group was composed mainly of “pro-Sukarno and/or pro-PKI” personalities (p. 81) is again grossly misleading; in point of fact, the body was overweighted with military men (19 members out of 45) and had not the kind of representativeness which the PKI would be likely to have chosen. And so one could go on.

When Brackman is stumped for any conceivable source for his allegations, he resorts to far-fetched innuendo. Thus a perfectly ritual statement of the period of Foreign Minister Subandrio, averring that “if we want to be great men of a great nation, we must be able to cope with great problems”, is used to suggest that the speaker was here hinting at the elimination of the army chiefs (p. 65). Aidit gets similar treatment: his talks with Chinese leaders in Peking earn this comment, “We do not know what Aidit and the Chinese Communist leadership discussed at these lengthy sessions, but it is reasonable to speculate that the decision to move against the Indonesian general staff . . . was made at this time” (p. 156—emphasis added). Reasonable to Mr. Brackman perhaps, but that is merely an indication of the standards adapted in this wretched book.