

Indonesian Uprising Story Reconstructed After Year

On Oct. 1, 1965, Communists tried to seize power in Indonesia and failed. The army that thwarted them has since clipped the powers of President Sukarno. Here is the story of the fateful hours of the uprising, as reconstructed in many interviews.

By T. JEFF WILLIAMS (JAKARTA AP) — At a few minutes past midnight, military trucks bearing nervous troops coughed to life, shattering the sticky stillness near the Presidential Palace.

Across the city seven of Indonesia's generals slept soundly, unaware they were marked for assassination.

At the home of his beautiful Japanese wife, President Sukarno paced fitfully. Ratna Sari Dewi had not yet returned home. The former Tokyo nightclub hostess, in a Dior gown, sipped a drink at the posh Nirwana room of the Hotel Indonesia and chatted gaily with her escort, the Iranian ambassador. The date was Oct. 1, 1965, and the Indonesian Communist party—known here by the initials PKI—was coiled for action. The next 12 hours would determine whether it would seize Southeast Asia's biggest nation and turn it into the third largest Communist country in the world.

The plot was simple: Just eliminate opposition within the military to the PKI. It would be unnecessary to overthrow the government. It would be only a matter of time before the Communists had power.

OFFICERS RESISTED — This was the background: Sukarno talked of a government based on "Nasakom," an unlikely union of nationalism, religion and communism.

Top army officers resisted this and Sukarno was furious. Moreover, he seemed to have been convinced by the articulate D. N. Aidit, boss of the Communist party, that the army's top leaders had formed a council of generals to overthrow him.

Diplomats are convinced there was a council of generals, but that it was concerned not with overthrowing Sukarno but with stopping the Communist drive toward power.

By May, Sukarno had approved a Communist plan to form a national defence institute. He put it under a civilian directorate top-heavy with Communists. He also was considering a PKI proposal to arm peasants and Communist-controlled unions, to provide a lever against the army.

Early in August, Sukarno fell ill with his old kidney problem. The illness helped convince the PKI the time to move was near. If Sukarno died, the army would know first and move to crush the Communist movement.

WARNS GENERALS — Sukarno had sufficiently recovered by Aug. 17 to make a National Day speech in which he warned the generals that "if you try to upset the Nasakom offensive, you are reactionary forces."

The PKI remained nervous, anxious to move. It chose Oct. 1—Communist China's National Day.

Expert opinion in Jakarta is that the decision to eliminate the army resistance to a Nasakom cabinet came from one man—65-year-old President Sukarno himself.

The plan was to arrest the top generals, accuse them of plotting to overthrow Sukarno, and arrest them. Thereafter, the army leadership would be too weak to oppose Sukarno's plans, which dovetailed nicely with the PKI's own program for taking power.

REINFORCE TROOPS — This is how the drama unfolded: Sept. 30—Officers allied with the Communists brought to Jakarta two battalions to join with troops from Sukarno's palace guard under the command of Lt.-Col. Untung, which would spearhead the putsch.

That night Sukarno spoke to a mass rally. Later he sipped tea and chatted with some diplomats.

Oct. 1, just after midnight—Sukarno, in military uniform, was driven to his wife's house. Dewi, however, was at the Hotel Indonesia party.

1 a.m.—Sukarno's limousine reached the hotel. An officer was sent to fetch Dewi. She hurried to join Sukarno. It seems clear that Sukarno knew a coup attempt was imminent and wanted Dewi removed from danger.

3:30 a.m.—Truckloads of Sukarno's presidential guards and fanned out. The first truck pulled up outside the home of Maj.-Gen. M. T. Haryono. The intruders told his guards Sukarno wanted Haryono immediately at the palace. While they pondered the invaders disarmed them. They smashed into the house and into the officer's bedroom, where they shot and wounded him.

TAKEN PRISONER — Another truck arrived at the home of Lt.-Gen. Achmad Yani. The troops exchanged fire with his guards, wounded Yani and carried him away a captive.

4 a.m.—Now came the first break in the carefully planned chain of action. An assassination team sent to the home of Defence Minister Abdul Haris Nasution was met by his wife. Suspicious, she called to him to stay in a back room. Nasution's sleepy-eyed six-year-old daughter wandered onto the scene, was snatched up by a panicky maid. A soldier fired, fatally wounding the child. But Nasution had escaped over a back wall.

When other key generals were rounded up, all were taken to a training area near Halim air base.

And now came the second key blunder in the chain of action: Lt.-Col. Untung, instead of remaining to supervise his forces in the capital, went to Halim air base, there he watched while the generals were partly stripped, mutilated by frenzied Communist women, slain and dumped into a 25-foot well where their bodies remained undiscovered for two days.

6:30 a.m.—Communists captured the radio station, telephone and telegraph offices.

7:29 a.m.—The radio, in Communist hands, announced Sukarno had been saved from a coup attempt of the council of generals.

While Jakarta wondered what was going on, a young major-general named Suharto moved to mobilize forces against the

plotters. He turned to a battalion of tough, anti-Communist special forces whose shipment to Borneo had been delayed by accident. Within hours he had his counter-move in operation.

The plotters' battalions, left without direction by the absence of their commander, Lt.-Col. Untung, collapsed when confronted by the special forces.

9 a.m.—Sukarno showed up at Halim air base and chatted with Communist chief Aidit. Brig. Gen. Supardjo, highest-ranking military man with the PKI forces, arrived. A witness at Supardjo's trial later would testify that the president patted the officer on the back, as if in congratulation.

Strangely, Jakarta and other key cities remained quiet. There were no PKI-dominated mass demonstrations which could have paralyzed the nation. Possibly the PKI wanted to maintain an air of legality. The plan seemed to be to get rid of the generals, maintain order, and rely on support from Sukarno which would keep the armed forces from acting.

10 a.m.—Troops under Suharto convinced the palace guard and the two coup battalions they were on the wrong side.

Still at the airbase, Sukarno for the first time heard reports the generals had been murdered and mutilated. This, say those who know him well, horrified the president. He evidently had expected only that the generals would be exiled.



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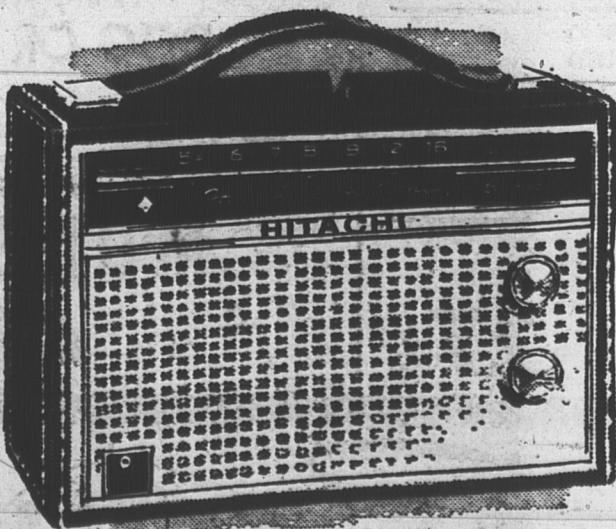
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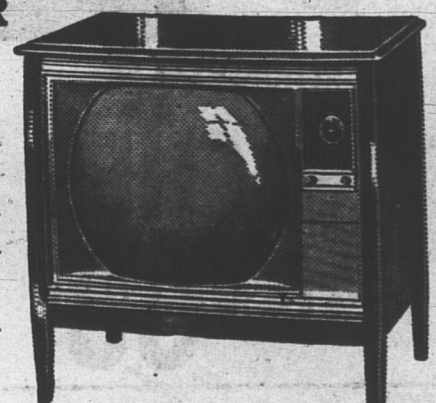
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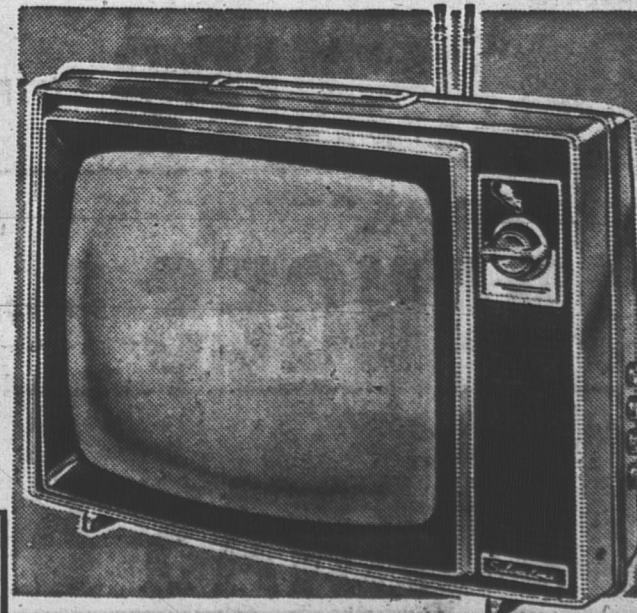


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