Brief aan Suharto

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To President Suharto of Indonesia,

Forty years ago working as a journalist in Rome I met President Sukarno and became involved with Indonesia. My great-grandfather, my grandfather and my father lived in Semarang. I first came to Jakarta in 1956. Today, thirty years ago, your nation experienced a bloody coup d'état. In 1966 I last met with President Sukarno mostly at the Istana in your capital and the bungalow at Bogor Palace. we talked many times and days. I filmed you for NTS television in your house at Jalan Tjendana. In 1994 I returned after 28 years with the Dutch Prime Minister to Jakarta and again lived there from January through April in 1995.

Indonesia is now half a century old. You are 74. In the next few years there will be another head-of-state. How will this come about? Bung Karno, the liberator of the Dutch East Indies had to lead a fierce battle to achieve independence from the Dutch. That War demanded many Indonesian lives. when in 1965 you overthrew Sukarno during an illegal coup, another horrendous bloodbath under your direction and responsibility followed. Will the third Indonesian leader be preceded by another bloodbath?

In 1965 you presented yourself as the savior of the nation who had prevented a communist coup. Bung Karno, you and I know the truth. It was a blatant lie. The officers that moved on September 30, 1965 were the true heroes. They acted to defend the Republic and Sukarno against an Army-coup encouraged and financed by Washington and the CIA. for years the United-States plotted to unseat Bung Karno. Americans at war in southeast-Asia wanted Bung Karno, and later Prince Norodom Sihanouk, to go. The alibi was communism.

When Franklin Roosevelt and winston Churchill became partners of Joseph Stalin during World War II against German fascism, this hardly meant that Roosevelt and Churchill had become communists. Likewise, Sukarno and Sihanouk were opposed to the
U.S. war in Vietnam. They opposed it with Mao and Ho Chi-minh. That did not make them communists, as you and your partners made the Indonesian people in 1965 believe. You deliberately made Bung Karno look as a traitor capable of ordering the elimination of six Army generals in cahoots with the communists.

In order to grab power, you falsely accused President Sukarno of having staged a coup against his own Government with the Partai Kommunis Indonesia. The entire world press is still repeating this falsehood. Actually you committed high treason. You intentionally disobeyed orders from Bung Karno, the commander-in-chief. In doing so, you became a totally illegal head-of-state. Most recently, you told the ‘Herald Tribune’, ‘I will clobber anyone who tries to unseat me unconstitutionally.’ But you yourself, Mr. President, are a constitutional fraud posing as saviour of the nation against the communists.

Bung Karno's mindscape - which unlike you I knew and understood in depth - was completely geared to the acceptance of human rights and basic democratic principles. If the Partai Nasionalis Indonesia was his own brainchild, he looked upon the PKI as a step-child. He was Bapak of all Indonesians including the communists. They sided with him against the sell-out of national wealth to foreign interests. They refused, as President Sukarno did, to put Indonesia up for sale to foreign entrepreneurs and gangsters, as you have done, becoming a corrupt thief of the peoples property yourself. When officers moved to forestall an Army coup organized by a Dewan Djendral perhaps members of the PKI joined them in patriotic duty. But Bungkaxno knew, you and I know, that never at any time there was a PKI coup d'état against the Government of President: Sukarno. Of course, the masses became deeply troubled and confused when you and your plotters told the people that you had to save the nation from communism.

In 1966, your staff, and general Sutikno Luki to disastro in particular, begged me to help convince Bung Karno to publicly condemn the PKI. This would have condoned your massive bloodbath against patriots and so-called communists. Of course, President Sukarno refused. He was fully aware of the truth and the facts. Already during the sixties he had received repeated warnings that general Abdul Haris Nasution was conspiring with the Americans. He told me so. Nasution's aide, Ujeng Suwargana surfaced in the sixties in Paris, Bonn, Amsterdam, New-York and Washington
to warn everyone, who was ready to listen, that Nasution was to replace Sukarno.
Ujeng added, ‘We will take Sukarno prisoner, entirely isolate him from the people,
and let him die like a flower, that receives no water anymore.’ That, President Suharto,
is exactly what you have done to him between 1965 and 1970. You are responsible
for the untimely death of the Father of the Nation.

I even accompanied general Sutikno on October 11, 1966 to the Istana Merdeka
and was present during a discussion between him and President Sukarno about the
role of the PKI in 1965. Bung Karno was a man of honour. He refused to lie about:
the communists to serve the purposes of the United-States and you in Indonesia. He
was fully aware of your treason and disagreed fundamentally with your policy to
deliver Indonesia into the hands of international capitalism.

Since 1925, Sukarno's political philosophy was based on non-alignment, a
movement he started worldwide in 1955 in Bandung. His goal was always to prevent
Indonesia from falling into the hands of capitalism or communism. He called it,
socialism à la Indonesia. In this respect, the PKI agreed with him as D.N. Aidit
explained to me in 1961 during an extended visit to New-York and the United-Nations.
Your military career was a success. The president recognized your military
capabilities and advanced your career continuously. At the same time, you were an
illiterate in Indonesian or world politics. Politically Sukarno could not take you
seriously. You took his attitude as a personal insult. It was not meant that way. The
President tried to tell you, stick to military matters, await my orders and keep your
nose outside politics, politics because you are ignorant of what is happening in the
world.

Now, after thirty years of military regime, Indonesia turned into a make-belief
land leaving the impression of normalcy and prosperity from the outside, but in reality
you rule with an iron fist. Fifty years after independence Indonesia is a fascist
police-state where the people, journalists, workers, peasants and politicians cannot
freely express themselves in fear of arrest and prison. You closed, after many years,
most Indonesian massive concentration camps and very recently you halted the
custom to stamp passports of former prisoners with the letters E.T. (Ex Tapol)

These were indeed some steps pointing to progress and rectifying crimes against
the people in the

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past. Perhaps, you consider your presidency and thirty years of leadership a complete success. In reality you created a monster. Indonesia in 1995 is universally known as the most fraudulent state in Asia. You, your immediate family and children, your military and civilian associates have enriched yourselves beyond calculation or imagination. Even Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines now looks as an amateur compared to you. Marcos' presidency also came all of a sudden to an abrupt end.

Mr. President,

I last wrote you five years ago following the publication of your memoirs. I tried to point out a number of distortions of history, you had permitted yourself. No-one in Indonesia is free to openly criticize you for misrepresentations of fact regarding Indonesian history or the role of the Father of the Nation in that history. You are a man who is capable of even sending a simple newspaper delivery boy to prison, because you don't like the material he put into people's letter boxes.

My letter to you later appeared in the book ‘Primadosa’, written by Wimanjaya Liotohe. Now, he is working on a new book, ‘Primadusta.’ Realities and historical facts cannot be kept from the people for ever, no matter what barriers your policemen and soldiers erect to stem the tide that deals with the truth. Perhaps, the time has come to lay all the facts on the table and to take the nation into your confidence.

Could you find it in your heart to share with all Indonesians what happened in 1965?

In history, too often heroes are being executed as traitors. Indonesia has been no exception. For instance, colonel Untung led in 1965 a movement to protect the Republic and President Sukarno. You had him shot. His last words, however, were ‘Hidup Bung Karno!’ Future history books of Indonesia will identify colonel Untung as a hero who died for his country. This is only one example out of many. Has not the moment arrived at the end of your life to confess and acknowledge to the people of Indonesia that you deliberately distorted what really took place in 1965 to suit your personal ambition to pursue the highest power in the land?

I learned in Indonesia, that preparedness to forgive is a national characteristic. Indonesians have long forgiven the Dutch for centuries of colonialism and imperialism. You
all seem to have wiped from memory the crimes committed when the Dutch kept the East Indies bondage. The recent visit of Queen Beatrix became a dismal failure, because the Dutch are bad losers. They never admitted Indonesia's and Bung Karno's victory. They are unable to admit their wrong-doings vis à vis Indonesians. In a letter written by your friend General Pamu Rahardjo in 1994 the Dutch were asked to have the Queen place flowers at Bung Karno's grave. This letter, which had your personal approval, I brought to the Queen and the then Prime Minister, Ruud Lubbers. It was deliberately ignored. Fifty years after 1945 the Dutch are still unable to straightforwardly acknowledge defeat. Consequently the Queen landed in Jakarta in ‘a minefield’ as the Dutch Foreign Minister called it.

Indonesia had hoped the visit of the Queen would initiate a new beginning in relations between the former colonial power and the colonized. The Hague missed another momentous chance. Indonesia, and you personally, were insulted time and again. I knew conditions were not right and warned that it was better to have no visit than a derailed one. I asked the Queen, once it was decided to go anyway, to at least go to Blitar and recognize Bung Karno as Father of the Nation. Dutch bishops did the same. No - one listened. I fully understood Indonesia's dis pleasure which you expressed in various ways. Without fully realizing it, perhaps, the Dutch side heaped insult upon insult upon Indonesia, and you personally. You had no other choice than to make clear Indonesia's dissatisfaction with plain Dutch rudeness.

Having confessed this, I wonder whether the time has come for you to tell the people the truth about the traumatic events in 1965. I hoped you would do this on August 17, 1995. General Mursid, a friend of mine, is a genuine patriot. When I mentioned that traitors everywhere: usually deserved to be short, he calmly replied , ‘No, it is not for us to judge. God will do soe’ When I lunched with Ibu Hartini Sukarno, she spoke softly and kindly of you. Having been born in Holland I became angry. ‘How can you speak kindly about the man that betrayed Bung Karno and tortured him to death?’ , I asked. Ibu Hartini remained silent and shook her head. Javanese silence sometimes means more than a thousand words. I vividly remember her sad face at that moment, and tears.

In the west it is difficult to grasp this attitude of forgiveness. I still did not fully understand how Javanese minds work. I thought about it ever since, and per-
haps I learned from Ibu Hartini and general Mursid. Nor was it Bung Karno's way to settle scores with bullets. His supreme example to the nation also lay in forgiveness. Perhaps, this is the authentic Javanese way, which is a way the Queen and the Dutch Government likewise don't understand. They were even ‘kasar’ enough to bring sixty top businessmen with her majesty to Jakarta, demonstrating our typical ‘kruideniers’ mentality. A royal visit meant to symbolize reconciliation between two lands in the family of nations should not have been openly mixed with profit-making and ‘the merchant of Venice’ attitude. That too was an unforgivable error.

A former cabinet minister, who served both President Sukarno and you, invited me earlier this year to his house. He urged me not to write about 1965, since most Indonesians are unaware of the betrayal of Bung Karno by the Army in collaboration with the CIA. ‘wait until Suharto is gone,’ he said. ‘We had a bloodbath during Bung Karno's revolution for independence. We had one when Suharto took power. We want our third president to come to us in peace.’ A coming peaceful transfer of power is entirely in your hands. The Indonesian people should be freed from the trauma of 1965. Only you can cure those wounds by telling the people the truth, however painful this may be.

Your responsibility for overthrowing Bung Karno, for staging a momentous bloodbath and erecting concentration camps, are by now historical facts, whether you admit it or not. An Army officer, as a man of honour, should be courageous enough to admit error in judgement and confess grave mistakes, let alone betraying the nation and Bung Karno in collaboration with the CIA. You should return to the people the immense wealth that you, your family and associates stole from them. It is better to return them yourself, then wait for the day angry masses will force you or your children to give back the many billions all of you stole from the people. Do not miss the chance, Mr. President, to come clean with the nation at your own initiative. Otherwise you will join the rogues-gallery of historic figures like Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, Mobutu or Pinochet, the latter two being also CIA traitors to their country.

Will you heed this call and apologize to the people and Bung Karno's family and friends? Perhaps the nation will even forgive you for having been the cruelest and most dishonest corrupt dictator. Indonesia has ever known, since that seems to be the Javanese way.

Willem Oltmans, wartawan belanda

Willem Oltmans, Brief aan Suharto

copy to Queen Beatrix