

British role exposed

The role of reporters for the corporate Western media in the mass slaughter has been examined in an essay titled, *Media Manipulation and the Indonesian Killings of 1965-66* by Nathaniel Mehr.

The author of the newly-published '*Constructive Bloodbath in Indonesia*' argues that such a study provides a valuable study for anyone seeking to understand the techniques with which governments and non-governmental actors manipulate information sources in pursuit of pragmatic and ideological goals.

The campaign, which did not discriminate between party cadres and the party's mass membership, culminated in the violent deaths of between 500,000 and a million people, the overwhelming majority of whom were rural peasants who had joined the Indonesian Communist Party, PKI, because of the party's progressive position on land reform issues.

The massacre removed the PKI as a viable political force in Indonesia, paving the way for Soeharto to seize power and install a 32-year dictatorship that became notorious for corruption and human rights abuses.

The author accuses the British Foreign Office's propaganda specialist working with the government's Information and Research Department Norman Reddaway as the key to ensuring sympathetic reporting of the massacre in the British media.

The programme organised from Singapore included a series of deliberately misleading background briefs for the benefit of local and international media agencies.

Reddaway's "briefings" were for the most part drawn from information

received in top secret telegrams from the British Ambassador Andrew Gilchrist.

The author says Reddaway received about four a week by diplomatic wire service from Jakarta, passing them on to his contacts at the BBC, as well as British newspapers - *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Observer* and *The Daily Mail* - and international media organisations.

The stories would work their way back to Indonesia via ordinary domestic news outlets which relied upon the BBC and other respected international media for much of their copy.

Nathaniel Mehr's book and essays would have pleased fabled Indonesian author Pramoedya Ananta Toer, who argued before his death in 2006, that the role the British had played in the tragic events of 1965-66 had never been properly exposed.

The Southeast Asian Times – May 2009

<http://www.southeastiantimes.com/>