

# Three Wives of Political Prisoners Write about Indonesia's New Order Military Regime

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**ABSTRACT:** *This article examines three books from three women writers who were the wives of three political prisoners in Indonesia. They tell us on their life stories in Indonesia where their husbands were incarcerated by the New Order regime (1966-1998). The regime even held one of the women prisoners as well. This article sees also how they revealed their life experiences, though coming from different periods of time, using the same sarcastic criticism point of view. The aim of this article is to show the differences and similarities of the writers' views towards the brutality of the military regime during the New Order era. The research uses a discourse analysis by looking at the revelation structures from the three writers through a historical perspective. Another aspect revealed by the three wives of the political prisoners is that the people of Indonesia themselves were forced to accept all kinds of political pressures from the Old Order regime, and even more from the New Order regime who ruled longer. The three books have indirectly presented a historical reflection on the gloomy process of a nation's journey: what was Indonesia during the New Order military regime.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Wives of political prisoners, military regime, New Order government, and three books.*

## INTRODUCTION

This article explains viewpoints from three wives of political prisoners who wrote, in their books, their experiences during their stay in Indonesia along with their husbands who were imprisoned by the regime of New Order in Indonesia (1966-1998).

The first book is *Melintas Dua Jaman: Kenangan tentang Indonesia Sebelum dan Sesudah Kemerdekaan* (Crossing Two Eras: A Memoir of Indonesia Before and After the Independence), written by Elien Utrecht

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(2006), published by Komunitas Bambu in Jakarta, translated by Achmad Sunyajadi, and language editor is Koesalah Soebagyo Toer.

The second book is *Bertahan Hidup di Gulak Indonesia: Seorang Perempuan Barat Mengisahkan Pengalamannya* (Surviving Indonesia's Gulag: A Western Woman Tells Her Story), written by Carmel Budiardjo (1997), translated and published by Wira-Karya in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This type of books were never allowed to be published in Indonesia during the rule of the New Order regime, let alone disseminated. This book was translated to Indonesian from the original English published by Cassell in 1996.

The third book is *Selamat Tinggal Indonesia: Kisah Hidup Seorang Perempuan Belanda* (Goodbye Indonesia: The Life Story of a Dutch Woman), written by Ruth Havelaar (2002), published by Pustaka Utan Kayu in Jakarta, Indonesia, and translated from the Dutch to Indonesian language by Ruth Havelaar's husband, Hersri Setiawan.

From reviews of literature on this study, it is known that there are many foreign books written by foreign writers about Indonesia, either from the period before the independence (during the Netherlands Indies colonial era) or from the period after the independence. It is very unfortunate that only a handful of such books are translated to Indonesian language.

There are already memoir types of books in the Indonesian history references, written by Dutch or Western writers other than the three books mentioned above. Some of those books are: (1) Pans Schomper, *Chaos After Paradise: The Promise of the Japanese Egg Man*, in Indonesian edition entitled *Selamat Tinggal Hindia: Janjinya Pedagang Telur*, published and translated by PT Dorned in Jakarta, in 1996; (2) Paula Gomes, *Let It Be*, in Indonesian edition entitled *Sudah Biar Saja*, published and translated by Djambatan in Jakarta, in 1993; (3) Poncke Princen, *Liberty to Choose: An Autobiography as Drawn by Joyce van Fenema*, in Indonesian edition entitled *Kemerdekaan Memilih: Sebuah Otobiografi sebagaimana Dicatat oleh Joece van Fenema*, published and translated by Hasta Mitra in Jakarta, in 1995; and (4) Rita la Fontaine de Clereg Zubli, *Disguised*, in Indonesian edition entitled *Sang Penyamar: Memoar Masa Perang*, published and translated by Gramedia Pustaka Utama in Jakarta, in 2009 (Alkatiri, 2010:233).

This article only examines the three books mentioned at the beginning of this article. The reason is that they all have a common content and common background of the writers. The books by Paula Gomes (1993) and Pans Schomper (1996), however, are not discussed, because they revealed stories during the Japanese occupation and they were not wives of political prisoners.

All of the above books can be added to the Indonesian historiography, coming from people who experienced the bittersweet of living in Indonesia, either before or after the independence, or during the Old or New Order periods. The books by Carmel Budiardjo (1997), Ruth Havelaar (2002), and Elien Utrecht (2006) added to the existing historiography. The books can be seen as a form of historical awareness showed by the three wives of the political prisoners for the benefit of many other people.

This awareness stems from the desire to record their personal stories, or of their families, groups and people, in all kind of forms, such as daily notes, collections of photographs, correspondence letters, video recordings, biographical notes, and memoir books. The three writers chose to record their life in the form of memoir books (Alkatiri, 2010:234).

### **WRITINGS ABOUT POLITICAL PRISONERS OF THE NEW ORDER**

Even though they are not many, books about the political prisoners' stories written by the Indonesian prisoners themselves exist. Among those books is one that tells the story of the Dutch-Indies political prisoners when they were exiled to Boven Digul. The book, titled *Cerita dari Digul* (Stories from Digul), edited by Pramoedya Ananta Toer and published by Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia in Jakarta, in 2001, is filled with collection of stories from the prisoners exiled by the Dutch colonial government to Digul in Irian. Before that, there was *Boeron dari Digoel* (Fugitive from Digul), a fictional book by Wiranta, published by Tamboer Press in Yogyakarta, in 2000, about several prisoners' efforts to get out of the Digul prison. After the fall of the New Order government (1998), several other books about the life of the prisoners were published.

Between 1989 and 2006, seven memoir books related to PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia* or Indonesian Communist Party) prisoners' camps in Buru Island, Maluku, were published. The New Order government gradually released the Buru Island prisoners during the year 1977 to 1979. From thousands of prisoners released, only seven of them wrote memoir books about their experiences during their exiles (Alkatiri, 2006).

There is also a book containing collections of stories from ten ex-political prisoners in Solo, Central Java, *Kidung untuk Korban: Dari T tutur Sepuluh Narasumber Eks-Tapol Sala*, published by Pakorba-Sala. There is also a memoir book written by women political prisoners, titled *Perempuan, Kebenaran, dan Penjara*, published by Cipta Lestari in Jakarta, in 1999, which was based on the story of Sulami, a GERWANI (*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia* or Indonesia Woman Movement) activist held prisoner for twenty years after the 1965 bloody incident. Others are the writing from a woman

whose family became the victim of the New Order military regime's atrocity, titled *Kisah Lubang Buaya*, written by Saskia E. Wieringa, published by Galang Press in Jakarta, in 2001. And, last but not least, collections of stories from several children of political prisoners, *Usaha untuk Tetap Mengenang: Kisah-kisah Anak-anak Korban Peristiwa 65*, published by Jendela Budaya Yapika and HB in Jakarta, in 2003.

Other than those, there is also a novel and poetry book with 1965 incident as the background story, *Angst op Java*, by a Dutch writer Margarethe Ferguson in 1994. Similar novel was also written by an ex-political prisoner, *Merajut Harkat*, written by Putu Oka Sukanta, published by Ombak in Yogyakarta, in 1999. A tribute in the form of poetry was given to the ex-prisoners and their families to remember the terrible ordeal they have to face since the bloody Incident, entitled *Sansana Anak Naga dan Tahun-tahun Pembunuhan*, written by J.J. Kusni, published by Ombak in Yogyakarta, in 2005.

As noted by Carmel Budiardjo (1997) that only a handful of people wrote articles or short stories about their experiences. Most of them chose to keep it for themselves. Several literature works have been published about the life of children left alone at homes, when their parents were taken away during massive arrests following Soeharto's rise to power on October 1965. One or two ex-prisoners told their stories in interviews with academic magazines, but they usually came up with pseudonyms. Other than, several chapters written by an ex-prisoner of Buru Island, Hersri Setiawan, published by the *Index on Censorship*, no other prisoners living outside Indonesia publish their experience (Budiardjo, 1997: vix).

Carmel Budiardjo adds that not many were written about the genocide committed by the Indonesian Army which involved the death of around a million people during the earlier period of Soeharto's struggle to power. History of the incident that dragged Indonesia to social and political crisis was feared lost because many of the men and women involved in those dark days are now dying of old age (Budiardjo, 1997:vix).

Another reason why there are only a handful of books describing political prisoners' experience is the reluctance of the prisoners to write or tell their stories out of fear of persecutions, especially during Soeharto's era (1966-1998). At that time, a person can be easily accused as a "communist" or an "ex-PKI" (*Partai Komunis Indonesia* or Indonesian Communist Party) who will then experience all forms of discrimination, to them and their families. During Soeharto's era, almost a half of million people had a sign "ET" (*Eks TAPOL [Tahanan Politik]* or ex-political prisoner) on their identification cards. Having this sign would bring special treatments. They were not

allowed to fill administrative positions or to become bureaucrats. They were forced to report regularly to local district military commands, KODIM (*Komando Distrik Militer*), especially when they want to move to a new place. They were also not allowed to participate in the general elections.

From the above reasons, it can be concluded that the trauma of being a political prisoner could hinder a person to tell their stories as that can destroy their relationship with the families and people around them. Add to that, not all of them have the ability to retell their life stories to other people. Seeing this tendency, an ex-political prisoner (Putu Oka Sukanta) worked together with young filmmakers to produce a film about the life of ex-political prisoners after the bloody incident, especially the life of several ex-LEKRA (*Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat* or People Cultural Institute) artists. This movie could only be produced after the end of the New Order period (2008). It reconstructs, from the result of interviews, the traumatic experiences faced by several ex-LEKRA artists, some of the titles are *Tjidurian 19: Rumah Budaya yang Dirampas* and *Seni Ditating Jaman: The Art that Will Not Die*. Prior to this, a research conducted by three researchers: Baskara T. Wardaya, John Rosa, and Geoffrey Robinson about four ex-prisoner families were made into a movie, *40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy*.

### **ANALYSIS OF ELIEN UTRECHT'S MEMOIR BOOK**

Elien Utrecht came from a Dutch-Indo family. She was raised as the daughter of a middle officer of a Dutch East Indies plantation. Her life experience in Indonesia under the the Dutch, Japanese military occupation, Old and New Order rules was told with all its bittersweet. Elien Utrecht's book was inspired from a collection of her correspondence letters with her mother in the Netherlands (historical memory).

Elien Utrecht's book consists of four chapters of her life. First chapter tells her childhood stories, as the daughter of an *Onderneming* or a plantation officer prior to World War II (1939-1945). Second chapter of the book tells the ordeals Elien Utrecht and her mother experienced living in the Japanese prison camp during the World War II. Chapter three describes her experience living with her family in the Netherlands. The fourth chapter tells her stories after she came back to Indonesia with her husband, during the periods of Old and New Orders in the 1950s and the 1960s. This article will only focus on this last chapter, after her return to Indonesia.

After leaving Indonesia in the beginning of the Independence and settling back in the Netherlands, Elien Utrecht awakened to a new way of looking at the Indies. It can be seen from her choice to study Indonesian

language and literature as her major in the Leiden University. For Elien Utrecht, being backed home gave her the time to remove the veil from her eyes and gave her a new window in to the world of Indonesia (Utrecht, 2006:86). Her experience in the Netherlands made her more sensitive to political issues that were appearing between the Netherlands and the newly independent Indonesia. Elien Utrecht, then, married Ernest Utrecht who was also had an Indo blood and had the same passions as her. Elien Utrecht and her husband finally decided to go back to Indonesia together, armed with strong determination to build a new Indonesia.

In the history of Indonesia, it is not yet known how many people were like Elien and Ernest Utrecht in terms of wanting to come back and work again in Indonesia. This is an interesting phenomenon that needs further research, because the great majority usually did the opposite of that, especially after the nationalisation of Dutch companies in Indonesia in the year of 1957 to 1958 where many Dutch and Indo decided to live in the Netherlands, USA (United States of America), and Australia; and became their citizens.

Elien Utrecht noted that during the Soekarno's era (1959-1965), there was a significant change in the representation of the socio-political phenomena, though there are still existed other facts such as social structures. Though Indonesia had gained independence, there was still a social tension between the Dutch-Indos and the Indonesians. An important thing from this period is Elien Utrecht's notes on the conditions of the public health, education, transportation, and the symptoms of corruption during the 1950s and 1960s, which, if compared to the current condition, is not much different (Alkatiri, 2010:236).

Elien Utrecht tells us that during the Old Order era (1959-1965), her husband's career gradually increased, from a member of DPA (*Dewan Pertimbangan Agung* or Supreme Advisory Council) to a member of the MPRS (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Sementara* or Provisional People's Advisory Assembly). But it was Ernest Utrecht's sharp criticisms against the military involvement in the politics and in the structure of the government that lead him to become a target, and subsequently became a political prisoner. Elien Utrecht experienced being the wife of a flying instructor, a politician's wife, and a prisoner's wife. It was only after her husband was exiled, Elien Utrecht started to experience life difficulties, especially in facing the slow and corrupt bureaucracy. The same difficulties experienced by other women writers like Carmel Budiardjo and Ruth Havelaar.

Elien Utrecht's husband was arrested as a political prisoner for his courage to speak out and criticise Soekarno's policy and the military

involvement within the government. There was also a suspicion that his arrest was due to pressures from his political enemies who could not accept the role of a foreign descendant, like Ernest Utrecht, in the parliament.

From the viewpoint of a wife of a politician and a prisoner, Elien Utrecht noted the habit of Soekarno's regime to create political slogans, such as *NASAKOM* (*Nasionalis, Agama, dan Komunis* or Nationalist, Religionist, and Communist), *BERDIKARI* (*Berdiri di Atas Kaki Sendiri* or Be Self-Reliant), *NEKOLIM* (*Neo Kolonialisme dan Imperialisme* or Neocolonialism and Imperialism), *TURBA* (*Turun ke Bawah* or Visit by Officials to Villages), *MANIPOL USDEK* (*Manifesto Politik tentang Undang-Undang Dasar 1945, Sosialisme, Demokrasi, dan Ekonomi Terpimpin* or Manifesto of Political Orientation on 1945 Constitution, Socialism, Democracy, and Economy Guided), *Vivere Periculoso* (Live Dangerously), including *Ganyang Malaysia* (Crush Malaysia), and *Go to Hell with Your Aid* (Utrecht, 2006:179-191). Those terms and slogans periodically appeared during Soekarno's era in various newspapers.

First year of the New Order rule became a momentum for Elien Utrecht and her family to chose their life destination, to stay in Indonesia or move back to the Netherlands with all the risks they would had to face. Unlike Poncke Princen (Dutch soldier who deserted and chose to become an Indonesian citizen), Elien Utrecht was finally forced to stay in the Netherlands and left behind memories of Indonesia. The reason was that they were never fully accepted and appreciated in the country.

Upon living in the Netherlands, she realized how valuable it can be to share her life story and the socio-politics of Indonesia in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s from the perspective of a wife of political prisoner. Readers in the Netherlands and Indonesia will benefit from her recorded life story in the post-war era of Soekarno's rule (1959-1965), where an understanding of the situations in the country during the Guided Democracy and earlier New Order era is needed. Her story also serves as a beneficial addition to the historical data. The readers can see the relevance between the conditions of that era with the current conditions. Elien Utrecht's life story is a very appropriate reading for our generations as a part of study materials in to the contemporary Indonesia's history, especially the story about her as a wife of a political prisoner during Soekarno's era (Alkatiri, 2010:236).

### **ANALYSIS OF CARMEL BUDIARDJO'S BOOK**

Carmel Budiardjo was the wife of a Transportation Ministry official (Budiardjo). She is a British citizen. The contents of her book revealed her experience during her three years of prison sentence, delivered without

trial. She spent all those years under four different prison houses in Jakarta. At the beginning of the book, Carmel Budiardjo explained how it took her almost twenty seven years to be able to tell her story. Her husband was arrested several times after the bloody incident in 1965. Carmel Budiardjo was freed several years earlier before her husband. She was forced to return to England with her two children. Her husband was finally released along with other political prisoners in the late 1970s. Back in London, Carmel Budiardjo became active in the human right groups, campaigning for political prisoners in Indonesia. Her memoir was written to show the cruelty of the Soeharto's regime (1966-1998) towards their own people, especially towards the political prisoners and their families. Along with her book, Carmel Budiardjo took the role of the mouthpiece of oppressed people under the New Order regime (read: the Indonesian Army).

For three years in prison, Carmel Budiardjo faced soldiers from the Army with all their worst characters. As a result of these encounters, Carmel Budiardjo suffered deep trauma until her old age every time, she sees pictures of military officers in the Indonesian media. This is caused from what she saw directly; the ability of these soldiers to use any type of force to get what they wanted (Budiardjo, 1997:xiii).

Even though the PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia* or Indonesian Communist Party) was dismantled and many of its members were captured and killed, the New Order regime continued their effort to clean out what they labelled as the "PKI remnants" up until the eighties. During those decades, the New Order would easily labelled a person or a group as PKI remnants under the policy of securing the nation's stability. It was, therefore, not surprising when they came out with slogans designed to corner a person or a group, with labels like *anti-Pancasila* (be opposed to Five Pillars of Indonesian nation-state ideology), subversives, night-PKI, security disturbers, disgruntled groups, anarchist groups, formless organisations, lefts extreme, provocateurs, and repetitive warnings of the latent danger of PKI.

It was known that many communists and several leftist military officers worked underground and relocated to South Blitar in East Java to rebuild their basis that involved several thousand members with the agenda of preparing a revolutionary war against Soeharto's regime. But before they were able to act, the Army intelligence learned about their plans and promptly prepare thousands of soldiers to surround their basis. Several leaders were killed under the fighting, and hundreds of others were cleaned out. According to Carmel Budiardjo, the wave of arrests in South Blitar triggered more waves of arrests in other parts of Indonesia. From



telegram data, it was revealed that the USA (United States of America) Embassy in Jakarta and Washington were fully informed of the massacre and even approved it by sending arms to the Indonesian military (Budiardjo, 1997:33 and 56).

After the bloody incident, thousands of prisoners from all around the island of Java were transported in trucks to Nusakambangan islands in Central Java. Carmel Budiardjo mentions the testimony of a young man who lived in the island and whose father was a former vice supervisor of the prison. He mentioned that around 30,000 prisoners were shipped to the island in the period of 2 years after October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1965. He told heart wrenching stories of the death of 20 prisoners per day from lack of food and illnesses. Every night, tens of prisoners were taken to Pasir Putih at the west side of the island, shot dead, and buried in a mass grave by the special police force brought from Cilacap (Budiardjo, 1997:56).

On October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1965, Soeharto consolidated the military commands by creating a special command named KOPKAMTIB (*Komando Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban* or Operational Command for the Restoration of Security and Order), a security and intelligence agency that took over the role of politics and monitoring. KOPKAMTIB was given the power to capture and arrest a person and choose the subsequent punishments. During the New Order era, many people fell victims to this agency. In 1988, this agency was renamed BAKORSTANAS (*Badan Koordinasi Stabilitas dan Pertahanan Nasional* or Agency for the Coordination of Support for the Development of National Stability) with no change of the roles and functions.

After October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1965, night-time curfews were enforced for weeks. Mass media were taken over and controlled by the Army and leftist newspapers were shut down. Other newspapers showed pictures of what happened in Lubang Buaya in East Jakarta, which were later found to be fake images created by the Army to sway the public opinion in to hating PKI, such as a picture of several army generals being sliced by a young woman.

What happened on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1965, was called by the political prisoners as "the incident". While for the military regime it was an attempted coup masterminded by the PKI. Carmel Budiardjo points that this was the justification for the unprecedented genocide committed by the Army against all leftist movements which caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people and the incarceration of other hundreds of thousands in to prison camps. On October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1965, the Army created a label for PKI alleged coup, *Gerakan 30 September* (the Thirtieth of September Movement). Soeharto's

New Order stuck this label as his legal justification for his decisions. The extermination of PKI were swift and concluded in just under six months, while the removal of Soekarno from the presidency took an additional two and a half years (Budiardjo, 1997:45-55).

Carmel Budiardjo was arrested on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1968. She knew this was going to happen. The knowledge of possible arrest came since October 1965, when so many of her colleagues were arrested, her husband was already in prison for two years (Budiardjo, 1997:10).

Carmel Budiardjo believed that since she started living in Jakarta in 1952, things were never going to be risky for a leftist like her. But this belief changed after October 1965. Before that, Carmel Budiardjo sincerely believed that a British woman like her will not face any difficulties (Budiardjo, 1997:11), and this was proven to be incorrect.

The reason for her arrest was her supposed involvement in causing unrest, creating feeling of dissatisfaction, and contributing to a revolutionary situation. The Army at that time was very quick in spewing out baseless accusations of imminent threats to security, such as the Communists were planning a coup towards October 1965. Carmel Budiardjo was also accused of subversion for criticising the policies of the people removed from their power by the Army. The military regime viewed her articles as a “prologue” to a coup (Budiardjo, 1997:23).

On May 1966, the New Order military regime created the three categories of prisoners accused of being involved with PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia* or Indonesian Communist Party). In the “A Category” are those whom the government said they had enough evidence on them to put them in trials. In the “B Category” are those believed to be the leaders of PKI or other banned organisations who were not trialled because of the lack of evidence, but must still be imprisoned for an indefinite time because of the possibility of their involvement. In the “C Category” are those deemed as followers or sympathizers of PKI or other banned organisations, but must still be held for an indefinite time. (Setiawan, 2004).

As stated by Carmel Budiardjo, there are many reasons why tens of thousands of political prisoners suffered deeply. Most of them were held without charges and without the hope of getting trialled or being freed. They all knew that political prisoners in the “A Category” are considered highly dangerous, and their cases are more serious than those of “B Category”. But, the prisoners in the “A Category” had more chance to be put on trial and defended themselves, and if they are sentenced, the chance of being freed after serving the time is greater than those in the “B Category”. Five years after the 1965 incident, there were still hundreds of thousands

of political prisoners in Indonesia, and only several hundreds of them ever put on trials. The chance for the rest of them going to trial was very small (Budiardjo, 1997:93).

During the beginning and middle of the New Order era, the people in general and not just the prisoners, always lived in fear and worry, afraid of having contacts with people affiliated with PKI or other banned organisations. Without any support, the family members of the political prisoners must be able to earn a living in a difficult environment with unfair stigmas attached to them. Many of them lost their houses, stolen by military officers. Some prisoners were banished by their families, and many of them could not work because almost all job openings were only opened to those who can show "letter of non-involvement to the PKI" or letters of good behaviour. These letters were also made necessary for other needs, such as if one wants to move to other areas, or for college or school subscription, even for marriage and going on a pilgrimage to Mecca. This is the main reason why just one prisoner can make the life of his entire families difficult.

According to Carmel Budiardjo, the social pressure in the villages is very high. A person can not avoid the suspicious eyes of a local neighbourhood leader, or even from their regular neighbours who could easily report them to the Army if they consider the person is doing questionable activities, such as accepting unknown guests. For the family members of the political prisoners, being modest, non-attention seeking, non-confrontational, even avoiding the main road, is a matter of survival. Living in these conditions never brought happy faces to them (Budiardjo, 1997:95).

Many family members gave up waiting for the release of their relatives, since there was never definite length for their incarceration. Because of this, Carmel Budiardjo explains, it is easily understood why so many wives of political prisoners stopped their efforts to free their husbands. The process, takes a very long time, is confusing and often involves further humiliation (Budiardjo, 1997:108). But as a person with a foreign nationality, Carmel Budiardjo did not give up easily like many other prisoners' wives did.

Carmel Budiardjo was temporarily put under a house arrest where she was able to see the highly changed city of Jakarta and recorded what she saw in her writings.

I saw so many changes in Jakarta, the place I return after spending twenty months in prison. Jakarta quickly changed to a Western style metropolitan, showing signs of receiving huge foreign investments. But for the majority of the five millions Jakarta people, this changed does not bring a better living. They still live in an unhealthy,

densely populated city, with not many social facilities, while the unemployment number soars high. In the New Order era, the gap between the rich and the poor is widened (Budiardjo, 1997:155).

After three months, Carmel Budiardjo was back in detention again. She was, then, admitted to a woman prison in Bukit Duri in Jakarta. Carmel Budiardjo revealed that when she was there, she was never given a blanket, nor a cloth, to cover the floor where she slept on. From the records, she kept about the Army conduct; it became known that the Army persistently indoctrinated ex-members and sympathizers of PKI with various methods. The Army had the belief that the Communists are difficult to be persuaded to abandon their principles. One of the methods was to send prisoners to Buru Island in Maluku for deeper indoctrination. Buru Island, as an exile destination and the base for forced labour camp of the political prisoners, was first built in the year 1969 (Budiardjo, 1997:164; and Setiawan, 2003 and 2006).

Many people never knew the condition of the Buru Island prisoners because it was never announced in the mass media. But it was finally exposed by the foreign media at the end year of 1969. It was reported that there were around 2,500 prisoners with several categories. The Buru Island Project, (INREHAB, *Indoktrinasi dan Rehabilitasi* or Indoctrination and Rehabilitation), was championed by the KOPKAMTIB (*Komando Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban* or Operational Command for the Restoration of Security and Order). The prisoner camp was the Indonesian version of the Soviet gulag, monitored 24 hours, maintained, and guarded by the military. To fulfill their needs, the prisoners were forced to work for 12 hours a day or even longer than that.

The women prisoners were spread out throughout various prisons in the island of Java. One of them was at Plantungan, once a place of strict isolation for leprosy sufferers during the Dutch colonial era. This special camp for women was opened on April 1971. It was located in a remote part of Central Java, surrounded by mountains, suitable for leprosy sufferers at a time when they were strictly isolated from the rest of the population. Hundreds of women prisoners were held at Plantungan for more than eight years. The strong and constant pressures from foreign power to the government concerning tens of thousands of prisoners held without being trialled forced the military regime to change its politics and freed them (Budiardjo, 1997:209 and 219).

Carmel Budiardjo ended her book with a statement of her wish to live long enough to celebrate the downfall and the death of Soeharto and to

see the creation of a democratic Indonesia (Budiardjo, 1997:234). Her first wish was granted, but the last has not been granted by the Indonesian government up until now. Carmel Budiardjo's book is much thicker compared to the two other books, and with her being an ex-political prisoner added to the deeper explication of all issues raised.

### **ANALYSIS OF RUTH HAVELAAR'S MEMOIR BOOK**

Ruth Havelaar is the pseudonym adopted by Jitske Mulder, a Dutch woman who worked as a teacher and was the wife of an ex-political prisoner of Buru Island, Hersri Setiawan. Ruth Havelaar lived in Jakarta and Bogor for several years before her departure from Indonesia to the Netherlands for treatment of her illness, and at the same time saving her husband and their daughter from the persecution of the New Order regime.

Ruth Havelaar died in the Netherlands on the year 1989 and left behind a husband and a daughter. Before her death, she had written her life stories in the book and several other books about her life in Indonesia, such as *De Glooide Buik* (1979), *Nasi met Soes* (1986), and *Despised Delight* (1988). *Goodbye Indonesia* had already been published prior to these books in the Dutch and English versions (Quartering 1995), while the Indonesian version was translated by her own husband (1995). Before that, her life story was also published in the year 1988 by *Inside Indonesia* magazine in Australia (Alkatiri, 2010:241).

Ruth's choice of "Havelaar" as a pen name was inspired by the story of Max Havelaar, a fictional Dutch character from an earlier book, who opposed the exploitation in Dutch colonies. She felt the pen name was apt to be the aspirational voice of the pariahs suppressed under the New Order military regime (Havelaar, 2002:140). There are a lot of similarities in the life stories and viewpoints between Elien Utrecht, Carmel Budiardjo, and Ruth Havelaar concerning the conditions in Indonesia. Just like Elien Utrecht with her description of the Old Order era, both Ruth Havelaar, and Carmel Budiardjo described the New Order era with the same critical passions.

Ruth Havelaar's story in the book began with her telling how big the difference between her and her husband was. As she stated, "*We both came from totally different family, culture, and political backgrounds. There were hardly any compatibilities on anything*" (Havelaar, 2002:2). Her husband was born in Central Java, while she was in Utrecht, Netherlands. Ruth Havelaar was the daughter of a Dutch carpenter and raised in post World War II era (1939-1945), while her husband was raised in a former Dutch colony. Ruth Havelaar spent her earlier life in a country that had a long

history of seeking out democracy (Havelaar, 2002:2).

From her viewpoints and life experience, Ruth Havelaar compared the differences between the position of military members in Netherlands and in Indonesia. In the Netherlands, she said, "*Soldiers are nothing more than those who stopped without knowing themselves. But in Indonesia, soldiers are kings*" (Havelaar, 2002:2). This shows how Ruth Havelaar viewed Indonesia from the perspective of a Dutch woman influenced by cultural differences between the two nations.

Another difference she revealed was about status. Ruth Havelaar entered Indonesia as a tourist with a passport that can be used to go any where. While her ex-political prisoner husband lived without a permanent job, passport, voting rights, and even though he was given an identification card, it was still marked with a discriminative label (Havelaar, 2002:3).

In her memoir, Ruth Havelaar critically observed many social and cultural aspects of Indonesian life flourished under the New Order, including the politics of discrimination. Concerning political prisoners, for example, Ruth Havelaar explained that they were the outcasts, detained without due process, marginalized by the society, even more by the people in power (Havelaar, 2002:6). Ruth Havelaar found this to be true the day when none of her neighbours came to her wedding, and the subsequent constant monitoring on her activities (Havelaar, 2002: 24 and 39). But Ruth Havelaar understood that the reason behind their treatment towards her was none other than fear of persecution from the regime (Havelaar, 2002:86). As explained by Carmel Budiardjo, this repressive condition forced them to never put on happy faces (Havelaar, 2002:95).

After Soeharto received the SUPER SEMAR (*Surat Perintah Sebelas Maret* or Order of March the Eleventh) in 1966 from President Soekarno, he began the extermination process of the PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia* or Indonesian Communist Party) and its sympathizers, members, and their families. Some were executed under his direct orders. Most victims were in the East Java province, a place that saw the fightings between the NU (*Nahdatul Ulama* or Emerging of the Islamic Scholars) Ulema and farmers affiliated with PKI.

Some surviving victims were sent as prisoners to forced labor camps of Buru Island, the Indonesian equivalent to the Soviet gulag system. They were sent in waves between 1968 to 1974, and highly likely that most of them never even heard the news of the killings of seven army generals that had become the basis of this revenge against civilians. The Buru Island prisoners were subsequently released until the year of 1978, among them was Ruth Havelaar's husband, Hersri Setiawan (Alkatiri, 2010:236).

Ruth Havelaar saw that political prisoners had their own community which included innocent members of their families who never understood why they had to be labelled along with the same paint, which usually resulted in them being marginalized by the society (Havelaar, 2002:35-41 and 47). Realizing the situation, Ruth became more cautious in all her actions that include having to hide everything that can be deemed by the government as a subversion act (Havelaar, 2002:31-33 and 75-77). The same situation was also told in Carmel Budiardjo's book (1997:94).

During the New Order era (1966-1998), this term or slogan "subversion" was well known, having been copied from the Dutch Colonial law terms that was defined as acts that are dangerous to the nation's security. This term was, then, used as a justification excuse for every incarceration the government did to people deemed as enemies of the country. Concerning the meaning of the word subversion used often by the ruling regime, Ruth Havelaar writes:

It is actually not very clear to me what is viewed as subversion by the Indonesian government. Maybe it can be formulated in this way: Every book or any reading material that touches a little bit about Soeharto's family or military, that is written by those whose names were on the LEKRA [*Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat* or People Cultural Institute] list or ex-political prisoners (Havelaar, 2002:89).

All books about the "Thirtieth of September Movement" must only be written by those who supported the government. According to Ruth Havelaar, "*Books have become the indoctrination tools, not the tools to raise understanding*" (Havelaar, 2002:89). That was Ruth Havelaar's understanding of the term "subversion" which was used frequently by the New Order regime to arrest people who criticised government policies.

In her book, Ruth Havelaar tells many stories related to the Javanese social and cultural backgrounds of her husband's family. It is probably from this overexposure of Javanese culture and people that Ruth Havelaar generalized all Indonesians (Eastern people) as non-confrontational, harmonic, good listeners, difficult to predict the depth of their thoughts, and way more diplomatic than the Western people (Havelaar, 2002:63). It is unfortunate that Ruth Havelaar did not realize that many people in the military, her most disliked profession, including President Soeharto himself, was Javanese.

Ruth Havelaar was forced to deal with the intricacy of corrupt Indonesian bureaucracy, such as when she and her husband had to bribe the officials just to get their passports and marriage certificate (Havelaar, 2002:20, 25,

and 125). Ruth Havelaar also found that the bureaucracy of the New Order had been used as a base for corruption and a forcing tool even against non-political prisoners (Havelaar, 2002:69).

According to Ruth Havelaar, the New Order government successfully instilled fear in people's hearts and the sovereignty of the people was never acknowledged by the ruling military, so all there was whispers of silent objections (Havelaar, 2002:63-70). This is the exact same condition felt by the people of the Soviet Union under the rule of the communist regime. Ruth Havelaar experienced direct results from living under the militaristic, authoritarian New Order regime who was headed by the Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI, *Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia*, especially from the Army), so she highlighted more of her criticism towards the Soeharto regime in their abuses of human rights (Havelaar, 2002:93-99), including the tampered General Elections of 1982 and 1987 (Havelaar, 2002:109 and 115-121).

All the bad impressions about the New Order regime were told in 134 pages. The stories can indirectly be viewed as additional data in the study of the history of the New Order, seen from non-Indonesian perspectives. It can also be said that the story is not free of subjectivity, but it is this precise viewpoints that show the superiority of these books from other books that are written by observers or people who never tasted the bitterness of living under the New Order era (Alkatiri, 2010:245).

## **CONCLUSION**

The first book tells a period in the Old Order regime and touched a little on the New Order. The second and third books explained the efforts of the New Order regime, represented by the Army, to purge the country of the Indonesian Communist Party along with its members or sympathizers.

There are two similarities from the three books. *First*, they all are in the same genre; memoirs on variety of experiences met by the three wives of the political prisoners. *Second*, the two women (Carmel Budiardjo and Ruth Havelaar) are still foreign citizens; while Elien Utrecht, who at the beginning was very adamant about becoming an Indonesian citizen, was forced to strip her citizenship because there was never an adequate guarantee for her family from having a decent life. Of so many political prisoners, in the Indonesian historical references, it can be said that only these three women who were brave enough to reveal, from their feminine side, what they and their husbands experienced.

The three writers also directly and critically assessed Indonesia's plodding and corrupt government bureaucracy, especially during the New



Order era; and at the same time explicitly described the people's conditions under the grip of a militaristic, authoritarian regime who controlled, and watched all aspects of the people's life, including the life of the political prisoners' families. The same reason shared by the three writers to leave Indonesia was political pressure, in which there was no guarantee of a decent life for a free citizen, let alone ex-political prisoners. The three writers added that even though there was a significant progress on the nation building, only few could enjoy.

Another aspect revealed by the three wives of the political prisoners is that the people of Indonesia themselves were forced to accept all kinds of political pressures from the Old Order regime, and even more from the New Order regime who ruled longer. It, thus, can be said that the process of shaping and the betterment of Indonesian political lives described by the three writers above have not yet significantly improved until today, especially with regard to human rights problems and democracy. The three books have indirectly presented a historical reflection on the gloomy process of a nation's journey: what was Indonesia during the New Order military regime.

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