

ANATOMY OF PRESS CENSORSHIP IN INDONESIA

The Case of *Jakarta, Jakarta* and the Dili Massacre

Jakarta, Jakarta, better known as *JJ*, is a weekly magazine which its editors like to think of as Indonesia's answer to *Paris-Match* and its reporters treat as something more akin to New York's *Village Voice*. A brash, colorful, trendy magazine, *JJ* has been consistently on the limits of what Indonesian authorities regard as acceptable journalism. It was completely in character, therefore, that after the massacre in Dili on November 12, *JJ* sent two reporters off to East Timor to see what they could find out, and the two came back with some of the most graphic eyewitness accounts available. The results appeared in the issue No. 288, January 4-10, 1992. By the end of January, three editors had been sacked, a result of veiled warnings from the military and what appears to have been an effort by the publisher to pre-empt more drastic action. Asia Watch has obtained documents which offer a fascinating insight into how the case developed and how press censorship works in Indonesia.

1. The Original Story

Issue No.288 contained a three-part report on Dili, consisting of an interview with the new regional commander, H.S. Mantiri whose appointment to succeed the Bali-based Major General Sintong Panjaitan had just been announced; an interview with East Timor Governor Mario Carrascalao on some of the reasons East Timorese resented the Indonesian presence; and a series of excerpts from interviews with eyewitnesses to the killings and subsequent arrests.

The eyewitness accounts caused the biggest stir. They included the following:¹

Eyewitness, shot and wounded:

I was waiting in Santa Cruz around 9 a.m. I was in the front, got hit, but was able to run and hide in the cemetery. From there, there was no escape. Soldiers entered the cemetery. Several of them beat us with their rifles. They hit my head...[blood] poured out. I was taken away by truck. There were dead people on it. Dead and living mixed. When we got to the hospital, we were taken to the morgue. The dead ones were separated.

The lights in Dili went out. This was the time when they took away the corpses. It was the night of November 13. The corpses were taken from the hospital, but who knows where they were brought...

Demonstrator, 20 years old

¹ The quotations are taken from "Pandangan Mata Saksi Tragedi," *Jakarta, Jakarta*, No.288, January 4-10, 1992 pp.96-98.

On the day of the incident, I left at 6 a.m. to go to the mass at the Motael Church. During the mass, Father Ricardo did not in any way preach or direct us in a way that would have pushed us to demonstrate. His sermon was about death. After the mass, there were already many people outside, most of them young people, about 2,000 altogether. They all walked forward toward Santa Cruz. At that point, I was in the back.

At the Motael Church, there were soldiers standing guard, about 30 men; they only walked to and fro. On the way to Santa Cruz, we were blocked by soldiers in front of the Governor's house. But I was determined to break through and ran to the front. In front of the police station, all the police were outside. When we got to Santa Cruz, there were many soldiers. We were cut off and could not get out again.

At the time of the shooting, I was in the front but I was able to escape and run into the cemetery. I couldn't count how many died, but it was a lot. And the shooting was coming from all directions.

When the shooting started, they [the troops] were divided into two formations, one in front and one in back. Their commander shot once in the air while shouting, "The front lie down, the back, shoot!" At the moment the back began shooting, the front ran into the demonstrators and began stabbing them with bayonets. I could only run, it didn't matter where, because around me, people were falling as they were shot, just as in the film.

After shooting five or ten minutes, they blocked off the cemetery so there was no escape. If they found someone still alive, including me, they ordered us to strip, while threatening us: "Now you better say your prayers, your time has come, you're all going to die!" I was stripped naked, then beaten with a piece of wood, then there was a person who took a ballpoint pen from my pocket and inserted it in my penis. I saw a friend beside me whose head was stabbed with a knife.

After I was tortured, I was taken to an office. There were about 30 people or more brought there. There we were tortured again, beaten and kicked. And we were interrogated, who among our friends had taken part in the demonstration.

I was detained for two weeks, tortured every day, given food, but it was late. In the morning, we got food around 10 a.m., then again around 3 p.m. and finally at midnight. It was rice with one piece of *tempe* [fermented soybean], every day. There were 20 of us in a cell. The torturers changed. We were tortured in the cell too, beaten together. After two weeks, they let me go home.

Demonstrator, 21 years old

...I was tortured in the cemetery. Then I was taken to an office and there I was beaten again. I was taken in a truck with about 25 of my friends. On the way I was half

conscious because my head was bleeding. I was only in the office three hours and then, because I was severely injured, I was taken to the Wira Husada [military] hospital. There, there were many other victims, and there was blood everywhere. There were a few buckets full of water mixed with blood, left over from washing the dead and wounded. One person ordered me and a few others to drink from the bucket. Our heads were pushed over the bucket and we were ordered to drink. If we didn't want to, we were beaten with a rifle. We had all been stripped and were still in that condition, including three wounded women and one who had been shot in the breast. At Wira Husada we were not treated, but instead tortured again. Then we were brought back to the office where we had been before, detained one day and then released...

Manuel Carrascalao (member of provincial parliament, elder brother of Governor Mario Viegas Carrascalao who met the National Commission of Inquiry for one hour) and a businessman friend of Manuel's

...It was about 8 a.m. and the atmosphere around the Santa Cruz cemetery was chaotic. I asked permission to enter the cemetery but it was not allowed. Finally, while waiting and looking for my child, my friend here was counting the corpses piled on the trucks. He counted 35 and there were still 15 on the ground. There were three trucks at that moment, two of them were filled with what, we didn't know because they were very high and the back parts were covered up.

The image we got then was of brutality. I had the occasion to see one person who perhaps had only fainted, but as soon as a soldier caught sight of him and saw that his head was moving, he pounded him with a rock. And one more case, I saw that there was one person still alive in the truck full of corpses, and the soldier pulled this person down and beat him on the head. Then he threw him back on the truck.

2. The Press Council Warning

The report on Dili was published one week after the National Commission of Inquiry, appointed to investigate the massacre, had reported to President Suharto. The reaction of the army was swift in coming. The executive editor of *JJ*, Seno Gumira Ajidarma, and two other editors, Usep Hermawan and J.J. Waskito Trisnadi were summoned by the Information Center of Armed Forces Headquarters and accused of spreading tendentious stories that could only exacerbate the situation. Nine sets of interviews belonging to one of the *JJ* reporters were confiscated. The problem was not only with the content of the published report, but also with its timing. Why, the army wanted to know, did *JJ* only arrive on scene in late December after the rest of Jakarta's press corps had left? Why did it wait until the Commission's report had been submitted? Why did the two *JJ* reporters return to Jakarta only one day before General Try Sutrisno, commander-in-chief of the armed forces, left for East Timor to celebrate Christmas in Dili? (General Try is a Muslim but his predecessor, Benny Murdani, a Catholic, established a tradition of going to Dili on Christmas.) Was *JJ* just trying to stir up trouble?

A few days later, the Indonesia Press Council held its annual meeting in Bandar Lampung, Sumatra on January 10-11. The head of the governing board of the Press Council was the publisher of *JJ*, Jacob Oetama, who as head of a publishing conglomerate known as *Kelompok Kompas Gramedia* or the Gramedia group, is also the publisher of Indonesia's largest daily newspaper, *Kompas*. The Gramedia

group also included the tabloid, *Monitor*, which was closed down and its editor jailed after it printed an opinion poll which inflamed Muslim sensibilities by ranking the Prophet Mohammed eleventh among most admired leaders. Oetama himself shut down another part of the Gramedia empire, a weekly called *Senang*, after a letter to the editor was printed accompanied by an illustration of the Prophet. Muslims consider any attempt to depict the Prophet as blasphemous.² According to sources within Gramedia, Oetama was still "traumatized" by the *Monitor* affair when the Timor issue arose and did not want another confrontation.

One of the speakers at the Press Council plenary, however, was Brigadier General Nurhadi Purwosaputro, head of the Armed Forces Information Center. He told the assembled Council members that he wished to convey a message from General Try Sutrisno regarding accounts from witnesses in the East Timor affair. He specifically mentioned descriptions of a ballpoint pen being inserted in a witness's penis and someone's head being stabbed with a bayonet. Without once mentioning *JJ* or Jacob Oetama by name, Nurhadi said that General Try asked him to convey the necessity of making the editing process and editorial staff more "functional" and to ensure that editors were responsible for preventing factual errors. For example, in the reporting on Dili, the press, he said, had to prevent information from leaking out which could be exploited by the foreign press. The nationalism and patriotism of journalists needed to be increased. He said printing information that had not been checked and rechecked was unpatriotic, especially if it was quoted the next morning by Radio Hilversum (Dutch radio).

Jacob Oetama, according to a Gramedia source, interpreted Nurhadi's speech as a warning that the editorial board of *JJ* had to be reorganized. As soon as he returned from Lampung, Oetama called a few people from the Magazine Division of Gramedia to discuss the issue, then summoned the three editors held responsible for the East Timor report -- Seno, Usep and Waskito. They were told they were being sacked from *JJ* although not from the Gramedia group, but were asked to submit letters of resignation so it would look as though they had left *JJ* voluntarily. They refused.

News of the action against the three spread quickly through Gramedia, and on January 14, Oetama called a meeting of all employees to announce their "resignation" effective January 20. Seno, who had been on the *JJ* staff for seven years, and Waskito left Gramedia altogether; Usep decided to stay with Gramedia on the staff of the car magazine, *Otomotif*.

The reaction of some of the Gramedia employees was instructive. They appear to have been more upset over what they perceived to be Jacob Oetama's overreaction than to the warning from the army. Faced with such a warning, direct or indirect, a newspaper or magazine needs to respond, but it should respond, they felt, with the minimum measures needed to neutralize the threat. In this case, according to one source, it would have been enough to transfer the executive editor, Seno, to a different part of Gramedia. He should not have been sacked, and there should have been no action taken against the other two editors. Moreover, the character of *JJ* should have remain unchanged, but there was concern that the new editorial team would turn it into an entertainment weekly only; the outspoken exuberance would be stifled.

² For additional details about the *Monitor* and *Senang* cases, see Asia Watch, "Indonesia's Salman Rushdie," April 1991.

The Gramedia sources say that Jacob Oetama had undergone a noticeable change after the *Monitor* affair. Nothing in the Gramedia organization was as open or free as it had been before. There was much more interference from above in reporting and editing, and a sharp increase in self-censorship. Given that climate at Gramedia, the feeling among the staff was that after the army's reaction to the publication of the Dili report, Oetama panicked and went too far.

3. Further Consequences

On January 31, the Honorary Council of the Indonesian Journalists Association -- a government-controlled body -- called a meeting specifically to discuss the question of how to evaluate eyewitness testimony. The Council decided to appoint a commission to guard against "exaggerated and unreliable" reporting from eyewitnesses -- such as stories like the ballpoint pen torture. In doing so, a member of the Council said the aim was to prevent "gutter journalism."

The Association's decision was part of a broader effort to control reporting on East Timor. In the immediate aftermath of the massacre, there was a tightening up on journalists entering East Timor as tourists rather than as fully accredited correspondents. Two American journalists, Allan Nairn and Amy Goodman who were eyewitnesses to the shooting, were blacklisted --that is, banned from returning to Indonesia -- by the Indonesian government in early December for "security reasons because they are suspected of involvement in the Dili incident" and because they "abused their tourist visas," according to Director General of Information Roni Sikap Sinuraya.³ On December 3, 1991, Indonesian Information Minister Harmoko issued a broadside attack on the foreign press, accusing it of "alcohol journalism" and "007 journalism." Despite these statements, Jakarta-based foreign correspondents had generally been able to enter East Timor since the massacre and do fairly in-depth reporting, although they were closely monitored and some found that intelligence agents visited their East Timorese sources immediately after their interviews were finished.

At least one fully accredited journalist was stopped early on, however. On November 18, six days after the massacre, the Jakarta bureau chief of Kyodo News Service, Kenichi Asano, was stopped in Denpasar, Bali, from boarding a flight to Dili on the grounds that he did not have a *surat jalan* or travel permit from the Ministry of Information. Such permits had not been required of other journalists who flew to Dili to cover the aftermath of the killings, and it was not clear why the Kyodo correspondent was singled out. But the need for a travel permit began to be demanded more systematically. On February 12, 1992 the Jakarta-based correspondent for the *Japan Times*, an American named Peter Goodman who also did freelance writing, was confronted by immigration officials at his hotel in Dili, East Timor on February 12 and asked for a travel permit, which he did not have and had not thought he needed. On February 18, he was ordered back to Jakarta.

On February 26, East Timor was effectively closed to foreign journalists. The Ministry of Information announced that all applications for travel permits from foreign journalists and Indonesians working for foreign news agencies would be "suspended." The applications were not turned down but simply went unanswered. Indonesian journalists working for the Indonesian press were not banned. The move was thought to be part of a general effort to restrict reporting on East Timor as well as a specific

³ United Press International, Jakarta, December 3, 1991.

measure to prevent coverage of a crackdown in East Timor prior to the departure from Darwin, Australia, of a Portuguese "peace ship" called the *Lusitania Expresso*. According to Jakarta papers, "scores" of East Timorese were arrested in an effort to prevent any demonstrations in support of the ship, which was turned away from Indonesian waters by the Indonesian navy. On March 21, an Australian journalist, Dennis Schulz, was deported, after being searched by intelligence and immigration officers and his notes and film confiscated. Schulz had entered Indonesia as a tourist, and was accused by Indonesian officials of photographing military installations, after he snapped a picture of an old navy warship anchored in Dili's harbor.⁴ Schulz had been in East Timor at the time of the massacre and had written a widely publicized story about reports of a mass grave.

* * * *

For More Information

Sidney Jones (212) 972-8400

Asia Watch was founded in 1985 to monitor and promote internationally recognized human rights in Asia. The Chair is Jack Greenberg and the Vice Chairs are Harriet Rabb and Orville Schell. The Executive Director is Sidney Jones and the Washington Director is Mike Jendrzeczyk.

Asia Watch is part of Human Rights Watch, which also includes Africa Watch, Americas Watch, Helsinki Watch, Middle East Watch and the Fund for Free Expression. The Chair of Human Rights Watch is Robert L. Bernstein and the Vice Chair is Adrian DeWind. Aryeh Neier is Executive Director and Kenneth Roth is Deputy Director. Holly Burkhalter is Washington Director.

⁴ Dennis Schulz, "Indonesia's Reign of Terror," *The Bulletin* (Australia), April 7, 1992.