
STATEMENT BY ONG HOK HAM DJAKARTA, SEPTEMBER 4, 1967

Introduction by Ruth McVey

Introduction

When going through my papers preparatory to writing a memorial to the historian Ong Hok Ham, I came across the statement that is reproduced below. Ong had written it in the wake of the disasters of 1965–66, which had brought him imprisonment and then a mental breakdown. His psychiatrist had suggested he try to reach self-understanding by writing an account of his life that emphasized the things he thought had most influenced his development. In the end, he composed his statement in English, because (as he later told me) he felt that helped him to distance himself from his feelings and thus gain perspective. The exercise was, of course, intended as a purely personal one, but Ong decided that it might be useful for others to understand what had happened. So he gave a copy to Ben Anderson, who visited Indonesia at that time, with the request that he pass it on to a few mutual friends. It was my copy of this statement that I rediscovered after Ong's death.

The document is, I think, of wider interest now not merely because of Ong's later role as a leading Indonesian public intellectual, but because his account brings to vivid life some of the dilemmas that confronted Indonesians of his generation. Histories based on political and socio-economic analyses may give us a sense of movement, but they rarely evoke the psychological and cultural impact of the collapse of the colonial system and the turbulence of the postrevolutionary years. It is precisely this impact, however, which Ong's essay reveals, as it was reflected in his and his family's experience.

Ong came from a *peranakan* family long resident in Java, of somewhat diminished means but good connections, its life defined by the petty rivalries of competition for status within colonial society. Hopes were pinned on the intellectual son, who was destined for a career in the colonial bureaucracy and was therefore given a good Dutch

education. This goal was pursued through war and revolution, even as late as 1949, for surely, it seemed, when times returned to “normal” this would be the road to the future. But normality did not return, and Ong transferred to an Indonesian school and prepared for a world that was far more open—indeed to the point of chaos—than the one of his childhood.

If postrevolutionary possibilities seemed manifold, so, increasingly, were postrevolutionary frustrations. More and more, people increasingly sought comfort in identifying with cultural-political *aliran*, which cocooned their followers from contact with those of different ideas as they competed for power. Gradually, as the distance between such groups widened and the struggle for resources increased, communication among their adherents grew ever more restricted. Ong did not take part in this self-segregation, however. On the contrary, he spent the 1950s exploring new worlds, discovering his vocation as a historian, and immersing himself in Javanese culture, both that of the ancient courts and of the modern peasantry. He was too cosmopolitan and too aware of political activists’ self-imposed blinders to commit himself to any one camp. He did feel strongly enough about the issue of the Indonesian Chinese minority’s place in Indonesian society to support the assimilationist LPKB (Lembaga Pembinaan Kesatuan Bangsa, Institute for the Promotion of National Unity) rather than the associationist Baperki (Badan Permusyawaratan Kewarganegaraan Indonesia, Consultative Body for Indonesian Citizenship)¹ in the late 1950s, but otherwise he remained neutral. By education and general intellectual orientation he was closest to the pro-Western PSI (Partai Sosialis Indonesia, Indonesian Socialist Party), but he found it too elitist and Jakarta-centered for his taste.

Instead, Ong remained an observer, but one who actively pursued his study by keeping lines open to as many groups as possible, traveling to the East Java countryside whenever he could, seeking to gain as rounded a picture as possible of what was happening. He had unprecedented access and perspective in an era of increasing self-absorption and competition among groups. This insight also gave him an acute sense of the tragic potential of Indonesia’s course, a premonition that was borne out all too well in the events of 1965–66. Appalled at the massacres, Ong spoke out and was imprisoned for it. Fortunately, this did not mark the end but the beginning of what was to be a distinguished career. But let him tell about those times in his own words:²

Statement by Ong Hok Ham

I’am writing this piece on request of Dr. Kusumanto Setyonegoro, whose patient I am for almost a year, after having passed a time of confusion and certain unpleasant experiences. I do not know what the causes are of my “nervous breakdown” or “mental confusion” of about a year ago. Are they caused by youth experiences, later

¹ LPKB was established, with the help of the military, to urge the Chinese minority’s assimilation into Indonesian culture and oppose Baperki’s promotion of Chinese ethnic identity. Ong Hok Ham’s defense of the assimilationist position can be found in Herbert Feith and Lance Castles, eds., *Indonesian Political Thinking* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1970), pp. 346–50. Baperki advocated Chinese “integration” into independent Indonesia, but not the loss of a Chinese ethnic identity; it achieved considerable support from *peranakan* (locally born) Chinese and was allied with the left.

² Editor’s note: we have retained Ong Hok Ham’s original wording and spelling whenever feasible.

ones, recent ones or through my present position and every possible other sort of thing? I guess they must be a complex of all this. What I do feel unsoluble are that I'm sensitive or have certain emotions, which I can ordinarily control but also feel at the same time that they are gnawing and simply heaping tensions to explode again at some appropriate time.

At this moment I'm a student of history, having nothing else in mind but becoming a scholar. Analysing society, present political trends, or social developments and everything else concerning Indonesian society. I often found that I'm talking of those trends very often as a natural process and give it a sort of inevitable course, then reproaching myself that society is also a Man made plant. Though critical and finding some trends definitely unpleasant, I tend to put it in terms which made it for me psychologically acceptable and probably also as a way of teasing my friends, who are much more the "activist types," consciously trying to mold society after their own concepts, whatever they may be. One would think that I should be unnoticed in this atmosphere of "rebuilding Indonesia" and be considered "an outsider" to politics or to the molders of society and things (which I refuse, of course, to be in certain illogic ways). Through my education and certain capabilities, as well as through my circle of friends I would almost say that I'm at periphery of importance and being noticed. Specially since I wrote several essays and pieces mostly on assimilation of the Indo-Chinese group into the Indonesian society and did some public actions in that direction but that was several years ago and in the period of "mass support and mass rallies" of pre-'65, the individual attempt to direct events got lost. For the rest, I must confess that I have simply no conceptions for society and all those things, though I might have certain values; but still as a single scholar, one has really no tools to try to impose those values and in general I'm more fascinated by the course of things than by my own ideas for the good of society. Yet from time to time man's inner ambition and the psychological atmosphere I'm in Djakarta circle, also tells me to take more part and that I'm a man of importance at least an individual who counts. A silly thing most probably! My circle of friends reproach me from time to time with this passive attitude, but I really do not know what to do simply because I do not know what is good for the country. And I think I better spend my energies on something else than try to capture the limelight of public position, real or imagined.

My being a historian, and through education (knowledge of Dutch) and family background, etc., I very easily move among sextogenerians with their memories of the '30's, or octogenerians with only living experience at the courts of the great kings of central Java. This period and this ability, I find sometimes very amusing and more pleasant to exploit than the "present events." But again this put me in the awkward position that even among my young colleagues and friends of a "revolutionary Indonesia." The fear of becoming an "antiquarian" instead of a "historian" puts me in close touch with recent trends and events, yet according to my friends to whom every "five years ago" is already "pre-history" I'm looking at it as an "antiquarian." Sometimes a fear of isolation and non-capability of communication with my surrounding enters me and then my frequent associations with foreign scholars must be seen through this. With foreign scholars I have a greater liberty to be playful with ideas, analysis, trends, etc., etc. I feel there is no necessity of guarding yourself, and of course you could somehow easier hold monologues, perhaps on Indonesia. Yet here

again, the past colonial ties, reproach me again and so everything seems to me sometimes filled with uncertainties and only unbalanced things.

Abstractly and concretely, I belong most probably through relationships and education to the group of the "Socialist party's political culture." The political culture of this group is urban, middle class, and on whom the "Western paint has not yet withered away." In university circles, my ties with its parallel groups—a generation of early '50's—are also closest. Yet I used to have friends in all circles and all groups and love to be wandering from here to there, from "us" and "Them," finding sometimes that the ways of "Us" and "them" are not much different. At the same time I was in fact fascinated to a very high degree by the movement and thinking of "the different political culture of Them," meaning the social political movement of pre-1965 (1958–'65) of the nationalists and the Communists. In university circles too, I'm fascinated by this "late '50's generation" of a more rural and regional cultural group of students. My fascination with this in some way hostile group is somewhat strange. In a detached way, I find them some how like having the effect of a cobra snake on a rabbit—at the other hand if I personally was among them they had a rather soothing effect on me, a sensation I often find also if I stay in central Java with its traditional bound atmosphere. Urban Djakarta or my "urban" friends would work rather in a nervous way on me and gave me more tensions. Finding probably myself in a continuous effort to come into a common touch with them, whereas with the other groups the effort is non-existent. Meanwhile we have to keep in mind that these groups are hostile to each-other.

Youth

I was born in 1933 in Surabaya (East Java) Both my parents are of Indo-Chinese family of seven generations in that region and their existence have been in close involvement with the colonial-agrarian social and economic structure. The family fortunes had been founded through being lease-holders of government monopolies like on opium, pawnshops, etc., and through throwing themselves with vigor into the agrarian social system. The "New Times" of the "ethical policy" of 1900, the economic crises of 1923 and '29 put an "end" to the individual fortunes of both my parents. Yet at the time I was born they still maintained "according to me" a favorable position through this situation. My father was employed at an insurance firm (Dutch) and earned a rather good living by maintaining relations with the "rich" relatives, thus making hardly an effort in his life. The family's past-time of gambling gave me "non-capitalist and non-calvinist conceptions" of living and heightened in me probably the sense of living on "agrarian surpluses," an abundance of time and no work. In contrast to it I had my step-sister and brother (I being the eldest child of a second marriage), who had a more "urban middle class education" with considerations for financial budgets and economic planning. They differ around fifteen years in age with me.

My family thus came from the middle class, and from a middle-group in the rather racist colonial society. Since very young I was aware that there were betters around us and they were right since through them "we" had a better position among our equals. Through my father's sort of job, the rich relatives were important and the sense of needing champions and having champions was always around. Another result of

this "middle position" was again that it was a matter of life and death to gain the attributes of the "betters" and to maintain the attributes of yourself, meaning sometimes to such fancies as dress, (Western or Indonesian), games (paying bridge), dancing, Western music, language, etc., etc. It looks to me that till the age of probably sixteen or seventeen everything just simply went its course around me father mother, brother-sister, etc., etc., and everything was held as example to me with the consequence that if I grew up I should become like him or this or that.

There were certain reproaches against me in this sense. I had a rather weak constitution as a child and there was a great concern that I should gain in weight, up till now. But I seem never to gain weight. It was always said when I was small that I would be more handsome if I only gained some weight and not be so skinny. Handsomeness seems to have been a concern to my mother for when she was expecting a child she was looking at beautiful pictures and drinking from the cups with the "picture of Ardjuna"—the ideal of manly beauty and "Sembodro," that of female beauty—and went through other rituals so as to influence the physical appearance of the child. My father himself also concerned himself with this, but to a lesser degree. Quite often as a child I heard the elders discussing f.i. the form of my lips, eyes or other things often with slight disappointments. In any case I was considered approaching perfection, but could still be improved in appearance. Oddly enough till now this sense of almost having gained or approached, or made, the "perfect ideal" is still present sometimes, emotionally I feel that "I was nearly this or nearly that" and "I wish I had been such and such or done such and this." A bit of unsatisfied feeling within me is probably present.

I spoke about examples then and those were in the first place my father and mother, and their respective families. It was decided in my family that somehow the children could only be formed through inheritance of the failures, traits, etc. of families (elders). In my case thus, there was only question whether I would become either as my father or my mother. Unfortunately my father was held as the "boe-man,"³ the "bringer of the bad habit of life" while my mother as the "better one." My father is a very quarrelsome and explosive man, a bit lazy, lethargic, a great dislike of being bothered and considered "egotistic." One other habit is that he had difficulty of getting up early and making efforts in life or do the unpleasant things. As a child whenever I had trouble of waking up early or sleeping, it was considered my father's "inheritance," and that I would be like my father. In contrast my mother is a very pleasant and easy going type being able to associate with everybody never minding with whom she associates or is in company with. This was held as the good example. As a child, when already going to a school, I remembered that I was fanatic about getting up early and sleeping on time, through alarm clocks and asked to be waken up and if I felt, without any justification, that I was awoken a bit late then I would cause a complete crisis in house. (Up till now I have this habit of waking up late and difficulty of sleeping early, just like my father.)

Of course in the family there was a sense of being able to be formed through education or associations and not only through inheritance. But this was only in the

³ *boe* (pronounced "boo") is Hokkien for "not," and is used as a prefix to negate the word to which it is linked. For example, the Hokkien word *bootjingli* combines *tjingli*, meaning "sensible, rational," and *boo*, meaning "not," to create the meaning: "nonsense."

field of language and manners or in obtaining school education, meaning that of passing successfully school education, which was considered a very difficult and long process. (school education not yet a common habit here and yet considered the "thing"). It gave, up till now, a sense of trying to fight against fate. This sense of "inheriting family traits" puts me sometimes like in a prison.

The only example held in front of me of my father's family and also with whom I was compared was a first cousin of my father, a man with a Dutch university degree, who had the finest manners and was a considerate man. Yet my father, of course disliked him and found him rather effeminate, with whom my mother agreed and sometimes that uncle is made a parody of in the family for his "high voice and effeminate behavior," and I was teased with this figure by my younger brother or older brother. My younger brother in contrast is considered the rougher and healthier type thus never likened or compared with this uncle, whereas I was compared to the "refined characters," sometimes even called "the silken thread" or "cloth," probably with effects on family hopes on my career. I was considered fit for a university education and a more or less bureaucratic career while my younger brother for a businessman.

My life seems to me to have been greatly isolated from the bigger society. It was much more closely in touch with the family and yet also isolated from their inner life. The inner life and personality, as well as physical traits of others, seem to me unknown. Through the age of my parents I had no cousins to play with, since they would be of my half-sister's age, meaning fifteen years in age difference. Another thing was that I was sent to a first-class European school with Holland Dutch children, while we were living in a second-class urban neighbourhood with Indo-European children who were considered too "rough or too coarse" for me. Going to this school was to me like emerging to another world. I was suddenly put among children of completely different ways and they put only fear within me. I remember that I did not dare to play with them or even to go a few paces from the sheltered corridor and go into the sunlit garden and play with them. This shyness from school surrounding almost lasted till my whole early Dutch education meaning till 1942 till the third grade of the elementary school. Associations with the neighbourhood children were considered not very good for me. This happened to that degree with my younger brother who had only three [months]⁴ of colonial Dutch education. I do not have happy memories of school.

I believe that in this close family life there was the strong influence of three female figures. But every one of them with different ways depending on the surroundings or times they have come from. For besides the family there were several old aunts, and favorite female servants. We children every one of them having an own [his or her own] family servant, who dominated the household more or less and certainly the children since my mother was a very outgoing and hardly was at home. Early emotional relations were even stronger for my female servant than for my own mother—whom seems more to be interfering with the indulgence with which I was treated by the female servant and by my father for whom I felt strong emotional ties as a child. This later changed, slowly but also suddenly, meaning from the time of a

⁴ This word appears at the end of a line and is difficult to read in the transcript.

family crisis, a parental conflict. After this I removed my emotional ties to my mother, and from my father up till today. In this situation it is understandable that my parents' marital life are not to be considered the happiest of examples of married life. My father was considered the source of tensions, his relations with my mother being one and another with his step-children. As a child I was very much depressed by this atmosphere. I have always wanted to have a very good and close friend whom I could ask things and almost share everything. For another thing was that the use of "dirty" words and jokes or swearing was completely forbidden to us, more so of the mention of sex, with the exception that "dirty blood" as the result of venereal disease was considered the worst of things and the evil spirit in the family. This sort of "tender care" and "sense of taboo" which I received probably kept me also away from associating with friends and the several gangs of boys. (f.i. sun was considered bad for my health, as well as wind, and perspiration, etc., etc.

The Japanese occupation broke off my school life for a moment and then I was sent to a Chinese school. Yet this was considered as a sort of poor replacement for the Dutch school and a sort of going down. After the war I continued to go to a Dutch school again and under a quick program of emergency I had to finish the rest of my elementary school in 1 ½ years instead of four or five more years. During the war playmates and friends were also very scarce in my memory since again my home was at quite a distance from school and friends' homes. After the war when I again entered the "Dutch school" and began again a regular education, it was largely left to my own responsibility to finish it and to go through its course, but I paid the greatest deal of effort on finishing this school being a bit retarded in the program through war etc. In 1949 through great effort I was sent to the Dutch secondary school and not to an ordinary Indonesian one with hopes that I would continue university studies in Holland, the finishing ideal. After finishing secondary education, I went to an Indonesian secondary school in order to get admittance to the University of Indonesia. First I studied law, got bored, and pursued my first wish, that of historical studies.

Religion

My parents' religion and the religious or spiritual life in the family was more or less typical that of East Java, with a great stress on ritual and omens, while also having a great confidence from mother's side in clairvoyance practices. My mother thought "vegetarianism" to be the best religion since it was good not to kill animals and eat them, but found the practice too hard. She also believed that she would be able to become a "dukun" or "fortune teller" and had clairvoyant "capabilities" if she only knew how to fast and meditate, but found this too hard a life. She often said that she had pre-sentiments when a relative was going to die or if some bad luck had fallen to a son or someone dear. I was greatly impressed with this "pre-sentiment" and feeling, and whenever my mother had some of this "bad feeling," or if we heard a bird cry, it gave us a momentous depression and unrest. My father's religious life was in paying attention to rituals of praying to God or to the "Deaths" [Confucian ancestors]. In this he hoped through rituals to get omens, usually expecting good omens. Bad omens being considered not to be given. Dreams in our life were important, before the day started my respective parents' dreams were discussed, what they would signify for the day. Good luck or bad luck since gambling was among others one of the day's regular

activities, this was very important as also other signs, like shooting stars, etc., etc. My own dreams were of course considered nonsense since I was a child except once which made a very deep impression on me. After a long period of illness and small sicknesses as a result of a weakened body I had a dream of being given a special medicine by my late grand-mother after which I was completely cured. There were other occasions of non-illness in my memory through a special spiritual assistance. It was the time that my old servant, with everybody's consent, brought me to a local Hindu statue of King Kertanegara. To whom I was introduced by the servant by shaking his hand and making an offering. Another time was when again after another illness a special "horse dance" was held at home (kuda kepong) after which I had to throw yellow rice mixed with coins to the public of small children who were attracted by the horse dance. Other occasions of coming into contact with the spiritual world was through going to the Chinese temple for medicine, or the burning of incense by my mother on Friday nights, her mascots from "dukun's" (priests), the holding of "public meals" (slametan) with yellow rice for the welfare of the family etc. and the visits to clairvoyants and "dukun's." The deaths are also important that they were considered to be influential on our lives though in an unseen way except through omens. For the rest I had a great fear for "evil spirits" known under their special and various names by the servants, I was always in fear of seeing them and sometimes even imagined to see one or tried to imagine it (The horse dance was to chase away evil spirits which might cause illness--well several illnesses--were by the family considered in the same way as "evil spirits" by the servants, except under different names.) On a very special Friday eve (Djum'at legi), once in every forty days, my parents and my elder sister with other close friends or relatives went on a walk approaching midnight to get special omens, i.e., a chance remark from a passerby relating to some very special decisions they had to make.

All these religious notions were dormant during my university and school life, since I was so busy with other things while also they were somewhat non-important to me. Omens or special signs did not affect me emotionally until several years ago. But before starting about a period which seems to me part of the nervous breakdown, I will conclude these experiences with another aspect, i.e., the law of "Karma." The law of "karma" or retribution was another strong notion I received, but somewhat as a "black shadow." For here again not only my parents or the individual's behavior in life was important but also the ancestral behavior. Under the shadow of declining family fortunes, my mother and my father found that this had to be blamed on either of their ancestors' bad actions, like lease-holding or something like that, instead of to the Japanese occupation when my father was unemployed or some outside influence. (the pawnshop, interest taking, was considered as the evil and resulting in bad luck among others--my grandfather had been a lease-holder on pawnshops). I was born and raised in a very tradition bound somewhat colonial minded family and I'am living my full life now in a post colonial society with different notions and values, while at home already through the varying ages of the dominant members of the family different social and ethical notions were planted and caused contradictions. A feeling sometimes of retributions and that I have to pay for their "misdeeds" rises within me. My "better position" and my "better chances" in life than my friends and present surroundings or the rest of society sometimes seems to be a reproach to me, that this would not have happened if not for the past of my family.

1960–'65

This period has been again in some ways important as leading to my momentary “confusion.” It was a time that I studied with seriousness Javanese art, religion, mysticism, conceptions of history, etc. It was with great ease that they came to me, and childhood notions and memories seem suddenly clear in its significance to me. When at that time I began to pay attention to mysticism and obtained several art objects, which I half obtained as art objects, but soon came a bit under the spell of its mystical significance and was a bit hypnotized by its possession of those several “art or heirloom” objects. Meanwhile Javanese art performances which I began again to love sometimes got greater and greater significance, specially the wajang with all its allusions to behavior, ethics, and wishes for things to come. Another reason which drew me back to all this was probably the uncertainty of times and pressures, first there was a rather great political upheaval with obviously a very great possibility of a communist take-over and then there was the inflation pressure, making existence a greater and greater pressure somewhat making life like a gambling existence, not knowing whether the next day would be enough or whether your money would be able to buy the same amount of food as the previous ones. During that period of pressures, I feel that emotions and uncertainties were somewhat of greater effect on me, specially emotions through special signs or omens, specially during the last three or four months before the October '65 events. In these months and perhaps earlier already there was an increasing tension which resulted in the explosion of the murder of the seven generals, the communist massacres, etc., things I hardly have to relate here perhaps. Except probably some of my attitudes to the political trends. Of course I disliked the idea of a communist take over, though I could hardly do anything to the trends of events and had more or less a feeling of “what can I do against it, leave it to tomorrow.” The other possibility was of course military rule and the banning of the communist party, which I reminded myself that this would mean very heavy controls and censorships with a banned two million communist party members.

In May 1965 I wrote a short essay and on discussing this with friends I almost foresaw events in October of that year. In any case the end of the Sukarno-period was considered in society as to be the most significant event like a “periodical change” in history. (this sometimes irritated me and reminded me that most of the educated classes still saw history not as a process but as periodical and cyclical changes). Through my foreseeing those events in a detached way and through its real occurrence, meaning the massacres etc., and having discussed this with friends made me feel frustrated of course. My friends at the time of events were all active, taking sides and trying to make use of the opportunities given to them through the events. My job was to go from the one to the other, trying to find out their emotions at seeing an event of great historical importance. Reflecting on it and foreseeing and warning about trends and events. All this was ignored of course. Another thing I did was trying to reflect and feel my emotions at this historic period and the more I did so the greater horror was filling me specially since I came from East-Java where I saw the result of the massacres and the whole atmosphere created. The murder of the seven generals also made me very odd, specially the stories connected with the murder. The more I reflected on it, the more the several contradictions in my life welled up within me. (one must remember that from going to a colonial minded family to living a full life in a post-colonial Indonesia is like a religious conversion of ethical, racial, and different

notions). Seeing violence on the street which I first planned only to see as a "historian" only gripped me emotionally and let my emotions run by finding that if they did not run at this time (I could hardly be spoken of as an Indonesian probably). In any case several uncertainties, doubts, and confusion resulted within me. I hardly could believe what I saw, could this happen here.

At the time of events I was specially tired physically as well as psychologically having felt the course of inflation political uncertainties etc., etc. Physically I went from hour to hour to the one scene to the other, and I just had a very tiring trips and made very tiring travels to East Java and I was angry at the course of events. I think that in December 1965, just before my trip to East Java after the September event I exploded against a friend's attitude towards the communist victims, then after my trip to East Java and seeing its real significance I became angrier at Djakarta

I arrived back to Djakarta on September 30, 1965 after a three month vacation in the regions (which was always emotionally more significant than a stay in Djakarta, where one has at least a bit of academic life and intellectual past-time). I arrived very tired from East Java almost one hour before the murder of the generals and the coup d'état. I awoke at around 12 o'clock, noticed that there was a parcel sent during my stay in East Java containing a picture. While the picture was hanged, the radio announced the coup d'état (September 30 movement). This picture contained a scene of the Battle of the "Bharata Yudha," a wajang scene considered sacred and not to play with. This specially gave me a shock. When I arrived in Djakarta, and drove from the station to home at almost 3:30 in the morning I saw a strange group standing before the "proclamation building"⁵ and suddenly a feeling entered me "aha this could have been just like the August 17th Event," this strange group consisting of a student (with student cap) talking to several people, a man in military uniform, and another with a "batik sarong" around his body. I thought that his group or scene could also have been seen on "Proclamation eve."⁶ A few hours before I left East Java for Djakarta, I bought an alarm clock by impulse, suddenly thinking that I should have more discipline in life by having an alarm clock (later reflecting that when there was no significant public change I hardly need more discipline). I almost missed my train to Djakarta, when it had a machine defect in the middle of the rice fields and suddenly started again, while my luggage was on the train. I had to run for it and jump in time on the wagon. This created great tension within me, suddenly thinking about a revolutionary train on which I jumped in time.

About January 1966 after my second East Java trip and after being filled with horror at events there I became aware of greater and greater confusions within me, my head feeling heavy and hot. Sometimes fear against which I fought and protested and then suddenly shivered for several hours while sitting in a meditative attitude, repeating that it should be somewhere else. (This was a few days before March 11). I did not know why I was in prison and sometimes the environment became unreal with the scene changing into a stage to me, we were all playing theatre I sometimes thought. There was another old man, among the prisoners he was surrounded by a battery of

⁵ Proclamation building: the Gedung Proklamasi, the building where Sukarno and Hatta proclaimed Indonesia's independence on August 17, 1945.

⁶ Refers to the eve of the August 17, 1945 proclamation of Indonesian independence.

medicines and I thought that he played the part of the president. Somehow I thought that I was there to receive special information from them on public events, for which as a historian I had a great deal of curiosity. I brought like in a stage everything in a special place. Under my pillows I found three books, one a farce called "100 follies" which I thought as the special character of the period of government, one about Thomas Paine (whom I saw the president, he himself often saying it) and one "key." This I thought signified to me that I should find out the key who and why I was put there. The other thing then started I was trying to solve impossible circles and seem to hear my thoughts and my attempts to solve these puzzles, things like "am I like my father or my mother," scenes of my youth also returned to me, "if you are circumcised and baptised a Catholic, are you then a Moslem or a Catholic, or Pantjasila." I had a whole scientific explanation for all these symptoms and did not realize sometimes this mental confusion, thinking that through some special technical devices the sounds, feelings, and emotions were brought to me. At some times I almost felt the physical tortures of the killed generals as they appeared in the newspapers. The words and whatever the people said to me around me sounded to me differently than what was actually said. This situation of course disappeared slowly later even while still in prison, but even after it they still appeared. My notions of "scientific" arrangements disappeared when I came to a friend, shortly when after I came out of prison and hearing my friend's younger brother speaking and teasing his brother's baby with words as if he was telling the baby about my case "Well this is of course impossible" and after it I went to an ear doctor and to Dr. Kusumanto. Now I have no more of those troubles, but still keep asking myself sometimes whether some emotions or impulses are normal or not.

The breakdown I would think should be caused by increasing tensions through the uncertainties of the time, the sudden atmospheric change in the political situation. Certainly also at feelings of astonishment at the event of the coup d'état, enragement at the massacre of innocent people etc., etc., the increasing tension of unemployment, other frustrations, etc., etc. But there are several symptoms perhaps which make me rather restless at reflecting on it. I seem very often to think that I'am that what the people are talking about. Thus if in company people are speaking about a thief "a sudden emotion enters me sometimes, asking myself could he mean me?" and then playing with the idea and finding an odd relief at thinking myself a thief. Like now f.i. I found it strangely fascinating and sometimes a relief to think that I'am a secret agent of the Communist party, or something like that. I have a rather uneventful life, and I'am relatively a nobody that really counts, I rather like the idea that in some ways I have to give air to all my feelings and emotions but could not and do not know how. I also began to hear sounds and voices, I heard trains, the sound of military boots, and the scenes on Sept. 30 like the "strange group of people" came cropping up and became sharper and sharper like me having seen the insides of a historical event and having been allowed to witness it without being present. Alarm clocks also kept sounding. Then the scenes and views sometimes changed before my eyes into something different. I once passed a scene in which a minister made a speech before a group of students. I suddenly felt very strange and confused and acted confused, while shouting that the minister was behaving as if he was in parliament and that he should be made member of parliament. The next day he was made member of parliament. Next day I heard a certain general speak then had again that strange feeling and had to

shout some remarks against him, displeasing ones and to my horror the next day President Sukarno made the same remarks against him, almost repeating my words. As a consequence of all this confusion and tensions I was later arrested, but I was still in this odd state. In prison this increased, suddenly sometimes I had a feeling that I was the courier of Aidit, sometimes even I had moments in which I saw several spirits of dead public figures and they all wanted to enter me—Aidit's ghost was also trying to enter me, to give a special message, but I remember that I protested against it and was very angry since as a Marxist he should not believe in spirits (This is corrupting his doctrines.) Gulfs of events, of emotions and continuously hearing echoes of sounds entered within me, I could feel like several public figures and feel like them at witnessing events. Some of these events oddly enough was true, I later only discovered it though in prison I could have no notion of it. A pre-sentiment of very strong nature happened several times there. When I received my first visit from my brother, my first contact with the outside world, I heard sudden echoes of his name for one whole day and night, then the next morning he arrived. When my sister visited me, never expecting it since she lived in Malang and could hardly know where I was while most people wanted of course to keep far away from me in that condition, I had a sudden feeling of being like put under a weak current and had a sudden attack of sleep, then her visit after five minutes of it was announced and I was like dazed. Another connection with a public event was that somehow I suddenly felt there the need of a university professor and for days I felt that need so strongly while hearing his name suddenly mentioned in echoes, then I read in the newspapers that he was appointed Minister of Justice and the echoes and names stopped. While in prison it seems to me through echoes of voices and feelings that I had an insight in public events of that time, of the time past, etc.

This sort of feeling started in fact a few days after I was arrested, started with seeing a shooting star causing me to shout that the "sacred aura of kingship" has run away from the president, and had a feeling that it fell on me or at that place, which of course I cannot see myself in a certain position. As a child I feel to remember that I was greatly fascinated sometimes by the life of the servants, the "tramps and beggars" who came at our door and thought myself in their position. In some sense I was already fascinated by their sort of life. At the time of my breakdown I almost tried in vain to solve the problem who I was and almost believing everybody mentioning everything "that it was me" to recover later from that thought, another thing was that I heard echoes and echoes of voices to solve who or what I was. I also saw myself in struggle with the people who wanted to make "someone or something" out of me, while I wanted to remain myself.