

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



In The Time Of Madness

Richard Lloyd Parry

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To Fiona

Richard Lloyd Parry

IN THE TIME
OF MADNESS

On the Edge of Chaos
in Indonesia

VINTAGE BOOKS
London

*Someone will always do what the gods want us to do.
I remember rats swarming all of a sudden
From unknown holes, just before the war.*

Goenawan Mohamad

PROLOGUE
BAD DREAMS IN BALI 1996



TOWARDS THE END of my first time in Indonesia I stayed in a house on the edge of the jungle and dreamed the worst nightmares I have known since I was a child. The house was a bungalow of wood and thatch with a road on one side and on the other a wooden couch where I slept under the sky. A thicket of palms and flowering trees descended to a river at the bottom of a steep valley. At night, the sound of cars and motorbikes fell away and the noises of the forest rose up around my bed: the electrical sound of the insects, the flutter of birds' wings, the rush of water.

I spent the evenings alone in the tourist cafés and bars down the road. Later, after I had fallen asleep with the jungle in my ears, I dreamed of knives and faces, and gigantic alien creatures which were half-lobster and half-wasp. I dreamed of a mobile telephone that would not stop ringing and of endless conversations with a man named Colonel Mehmet.

The island of Bali, where I was staying, was peaceful. The violence in Jakarta had caused no reverberation here. Or that was the impression which the local people were at pains to give: the smiling woman who gave me the bungalow key, the boy in the sarong who came in the mornings to sweep the floor and change the linen. Every day he brought offerings of petals and rice which he placed on high ledges, to thank the benevolent spirits, and on the ground, to appease the demons. He showed me how to summon him by means of a wooden gong which hung from the eaves of the bungalow. Its hollow body was carved into the shape of a grimacing goblin; the stick was the giant erect penis which the goblin brandished between its claws. But either the offerings were too small or the goblin was

not fearsome enough, for the next night the evil dreams came again.

They began with Colonel Mehmet on the mobile phone. 'You not strong enough are!' he bellowed. 'Or not clever enough. *Ja!* And all the time you are such a fine fellow, too!' In my dreams I tried throwing the phone away, burning it, even drowning it in the bath, but always it floated ringing to the surface as the colonel and his men drew nearer.

The trouble in Jakarta had upset me, perhaps more than I realised.

It had begun a month earlier with an unprecedented event: a mass demonstration by members of the opposition democratic party. All day and night, hundreds of people had camped out in the party headquarters, singing songs, telling stories and delivering speeches in support of democracy. All had been careful not to mention the president by name, but everyone knew that the demonstration was a direct challenge to him, the strongest and most intense criticism he had faced in thirty years. It was breathtakingly bold; it seemed unthinkable that it could be allowed to go on. But days passed and the demonstrators were left undisturbed.

One evening I had visited them in their headquarters. It was festooned with flags and poster-sized portraits of the opposition leader. The next morning, just after dawn, it was raided by commandos dressed in plain clothes. Lines of police kept spectators at bay as the attackers threw stones at the building; once inside, they produced knives. Hundreds of the demonstrators were arrested and people said that many of them had been stabbed to death and their bodies disposed of in secret. That afternoon there were riots across the city, and tall concrete office buildings burned with black smoke. For the first time in my life, I saw streets of broken glass, armoured cars advancing slowly upon crowds, men and women weeping with anger and trepidation.

It is important never to lose the sense of wonder at such things.

But now I was in Bali, the small, green holiday island east of Java, and I was here to relax. I chose to stay away from the beaches and travelled instead to the island's interior. The jungle soothed me, but it polluted my sleep with bad dreams.

I dreamed of climbing into an immense rusty ship. It was overladen with silent, dark-skinned passengers, and lurched sickeningly in the water as I stepped aboard. I dreamed that I was chasing a magnificent butterfly through the forest. A black beast was watching me with green eyes. Then the mobile phone rang, and I knew that when I answered it I would hear the barking voice of Colonel Mehmet.

During the day I sat reading in front of the bungalow, or walked past the restaurants and into the village. I visited a park where monkeys stared sulkily from trees and later, at a souvenir shop, I purchased one of the ithyphallic gongs. I met a German couple who confessed that they too were having bad dreams in Bali, he of a giant black pig, she of 'ghosts and visitors.' And on my last day I encountered a ghost story of my own.

I had cycled out to a spot on the outskirts of the village where thousands of white herons gathered at dusk. They flew in from across the island, all black legs and thin necks, folding themselves up as they dipped into the tops of the trees. A Balinese man told me that they were the spirits of people who had died in a great massacre thirty years ago. Most had never been buried; no prayers were ever said for them. They wandered the jungles and rice paddies as ghosts, and thousands of them roosted here in the form of white birds.

That night I opened the history book I had bought in Jakarta and began to read about the anti-communist

killings of 1965 and 1966, by any standard one of the worst mass murders of the twentieth century.

They had begun after a mysterious coup attempt against the old president, led by left-wing army officers. Within a few weeks, bands of militia men and soldiers were rounding up communists, real and imagined. There were denunciations and death lists. Whole families, entire villages, were seized. The suspects were driven away to ditches or clearings in the jungle and executed with sickles, machetes and iron bars.

Across the country perhaps half a million people died, one-fifth of them in tiny Bali. 'Many party members were killed by knife or bayonet,' the book said. 'Bodies were often maimed and decapitated and dumped in rivers ... On the island of Bali, Indonesia's only overtly Hindu province, the killings developed just as fervently, with priests calling for fresh sacrifices to satisfy vengeful spirits.'

It was amid this terror and madness that President Sukarno had lost power in 1966 to the 'New Order', the government of General - now President - Suharto. In the three decades since then Suharto had rebuilt the country, extinguished democracy and snuffed out opposition to his rule. And now, in the summer of 1996, the New Order was beginning to unravel.

Nobody realised it at that time. But within eighteen months of the suppression of the democracy demonstrations, violent change would be spreading across Indonesia. Money would become worthless, people would go hungry, and the jungles would burn in uncontrollable fires. Within two years Suharto himself - the longest-serving dictator in Asia - would be forced from power in a popular uprising. Within three years, bloody local wars would flame up across the islands, to reach their climax in the vengeful, programmed destruction of East Timor.

They were to be the last such events of the twentieth century - the overthrow and collapse of a military

dictatorship, in the fourth largest nation in the world. I was there in Jakarta when they started, at the beginning of the end of Suharto. Over the next three years, I followed them through until the end.

* * *

I lived in Japan as the correspondent for a British newspaper. I had come to Jakarta, by chance, the week before the riots, for a dull and unimportant meeting of Asian leaders. I knew little about Indonesia, I had found few books on the subject, and my expectations were vague. Elsewhere in the world, I had always travelled with a set of advance impressions, to be confirmed or contradicted by experience; in Indonesia, I arrived without even prejudices. The country had no distinct outlines in my mind. I didn't know where to begin.

The map which I had bought in Tokyo did not help much. Indonesia sprawled across its folds, a swirl of islands shrinking and thinning from west to east: plump Sumatra, compact Java, then the scattered trail of the Lesser Sunda Islands and the Moluccas. I recognised, as a geographical oddity, the crazed shape of Sulawesi: an island of peninsulas, flailing like the arms of an acrobat. And then there were the great half islands: Borneo, divided between Indonesia and Malaysia by a jagged frontier; New Guinea, transected by a line almost dead straight. Across this profusion of unruly forms, the Equator cut with scientific severity. From east to west I traced the names along its length: Waigeo, Kayoa, Muarakaman, Longiram, Pontianak, Lubuksikaping.

Stare long enough at an unfamiliar map and it becomes possible to construct a fantasy of it through its place names. But Indonesia's gave so little away. They were diverse to the point of excess; too many different associations were called to mind to create any consistent

impression. They ranged from the brutal (Fakfak) to the majestic (Jayapura). Some looked more African than Asian (Kwatisore); others sounded almost European (Flores and Tanimbar). There were occasional suggestions of exploration and colonialism (Hollandia, Dampier Strait), but one place alone - Krakatoa - stood out as unmistakably historic. The names on the map chattered and rumbled. With a little nudging, they formed themselves into lines and verses:

Buru, Fakfak, Manokwari,
Ujung Pandang, Probolinggo,
Nikiniki, Balikpapan,
Halmahera, Berebere.

Gorontalo, Samarinda,
Gumzai, Bangka, Pekalongan,
Watolari, Krakatoa,
Wetar, Kisar, Har, Viqueque!

Everything I learned about Indonesia added to my excitement and confusion. The country was made up of 17,500 islands, ranging from seaweed-covered rocks to the largest on earth. The distance from one end to the other was broader than the span of the Atlantic Ocean or as great as the distance between Britain and Iraq. Its 235 million people were made up of 300 ethnic groups and spoke 365 languages. As an independent republic Indonesia was fifty years old, but it sounded more like an unwieldy empire than a modern nation state. I had travelled a good deal, but never to a country of which I knew so little. All my ignorance of the world, all the experience I had to come, seemed to be stored up in the shapes of those islands, and in their names.

This is a book about violence, and about being afraid. After the crushing of the democracy demonstrators, I returned to Indonesia again and again. I stayed for weeks at a time, usually at moments of crisis and tumult. I was young and avid, with a callous innocence common among young men. Although I prided myself on deploring violence, if it should - tragically - break out, I wanted to witness it for myself. In Borneo, I saw heads severed from their bodies and men eating human flesh. In Jakarta, I saw burned corpses in the street, and shots were fired around and towards me. I encountered death, but remained untouched; these experiences felt like important ones. Secretly, I imagined that they had imparted something to my character, an invisible shell which would stand me in good stead the next time I found myself in violent or unpredictable circumstances. But then I went to East Timor, where I discovered that such experience is never externalised, only absorbed, and that it builds up inside one, like a toxin. In East Timor, I became afraid, and couldn't control my fear. I ran away, and afterwards I was ashamed.

I resist the idea of defining experiences, when an entire life comes to its point. But I am haunted by that period. For a long time I believed that I had lost something good about myself in East Timor: my strength and will; courage. In three years of travelling in Indonesia, I had found myself at the heart of things. I could land anywhere, it seemed, and within a few hours the dramas of the vast country would create themselves around me. Cars and guides would be found, victims and perpetrators would appear, and marvellous and terrible scenes would enact themselves before my eyes. I loved the intoxication of leaving behind the town and travelling into the forest by road, by boat or on foot. And I loved to sleep next to the jungle, and to wake up the next morning in the tang of strange dreams. But after East Timor, there was never such glamour again.

On my last night in Bali, I stayed up late with my book of Indonesian history; as I expected, when I finally fell asleep, Colonel Mehmet was waiting. He seemed to know what I had been reading, and to be angry about it. 'Yes!' he bellowed. 'Very funny this terrible thing is.' But there was a quiver of anxiety in his voice and I could tell that he was losing spirit.

'Go away, Colonel,' I said, because my new knowledge had made me powerful.

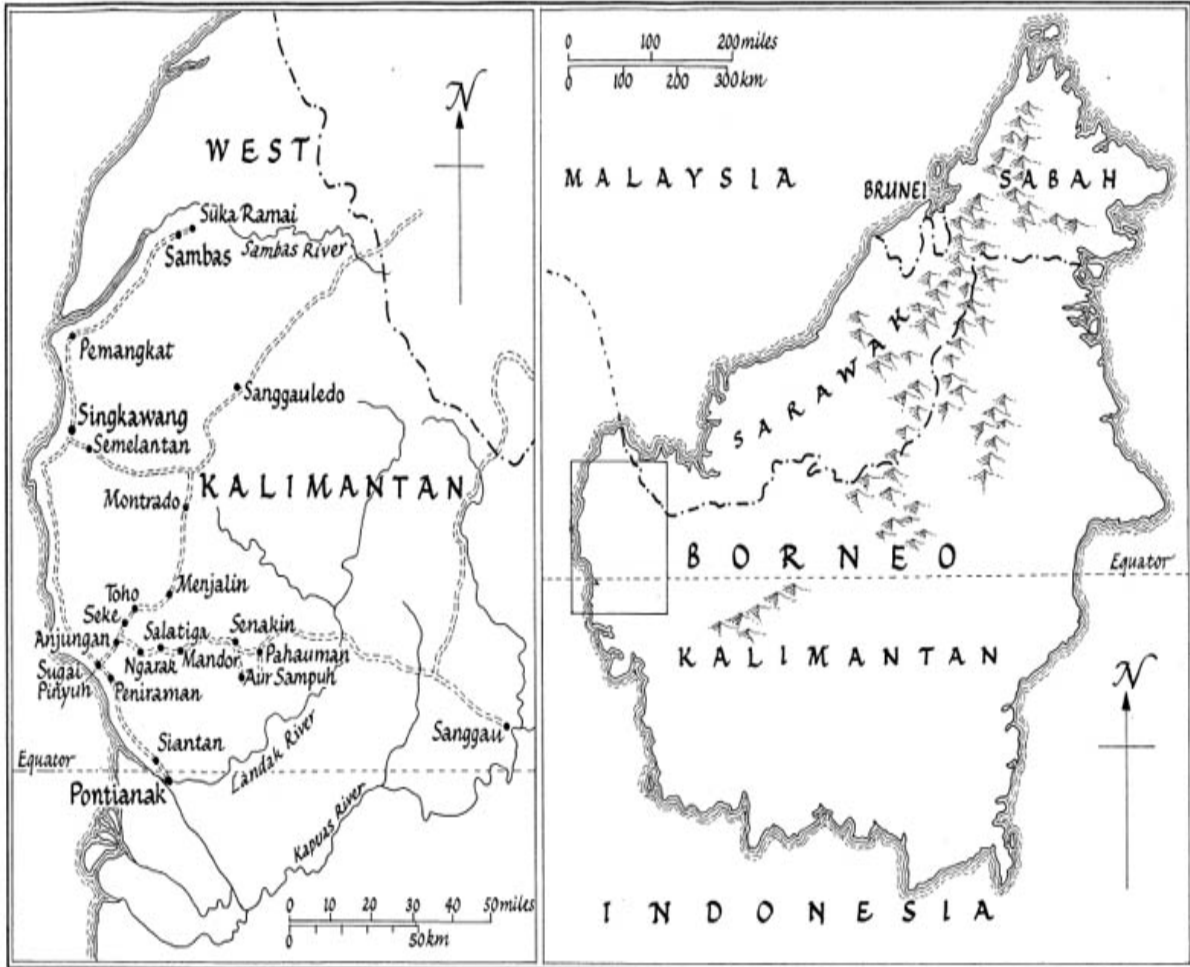
'You not always can keep your eyes shut!' he barked, but his voice was becoming weaker. 'It is not good for you to find you cannot make your dream.'

'Goodbye, Colonel Mehmet,' I said.

'To the destructive element ...' the colonel wailed, but he was already fading and trailing away, '... submit yourself!' I hung up the phone and found myself lying on the outdoor bed with my eyes open, wide awake in the mouth of the jungle.

I left Bali a few hours later. In Jakarta, the broken glass had been cleared up, the opposition headquarters had been hosed down and boarded over, but the soldiers were still on the streets and it was as hot and tense as before. I flew out of Indonesia the next day, as the government began to arrest people accused of orchestrating the riots. Trade unionists and young political activists were being picked up from their homes in Jakarta and Yogyakarta. Twenty-eight people, the newspapers reported, had been seized for political activities in Bali.

**SOMETHING CLOSE TO SHAME:
BORNEO 1997-1999**



WHAT YOUNG MEN DO

One

A FRIEND OF mine in Jakarta, a television reporter for one of the big international networks, came back from Borneo with a photograph of a severed head. To be accurate, what he had was the video of a photograph; the man who had taken the original, a local journalist, had refused to hand the print over, and making a copy was risky because the photo labs were under surveillance. So the cameraman had zoomed in on it, and held the camera steady. A newspaper could never reproduce such an image, and in my friend's film it remained on the screen for only a second or two.

It was lying on the ground, appeared to be male, and was rather decomposed. It was more absurd than atrocious, with a Mr Punch leer and wild holes for eyes. It looked mask-like and carnivalesque, but almost immediately it was gone and the film cut away to burned-out houses, and to soldiers stopping the car and confiscating tapes. The image flashed so quickly across my eye that at first I didn't realise what I had seen. The second time, I thought: so *that's* what a severed head looks like - well, it could be worse.

It was May 1997, ten months since my visit to Bali, and I was back in Indonesia to report on the elections. It was the last few days of the official campaign period and thousands of teenage boys had occupied the streets of Jakarta in long, aimless parades of chanting and flag waving. There were three official parties, and each had its own colour, its own symbol and its own number. Red Bull Number Two (the

democratic party) and Green Star Number One (the Muslim party) were on good terms, but when either encountered Yellow Banyan Tree Number Three, the ruling party, there were jeers and scuffles which usually ended with burned cars, thrown rocks, and water cannon and tear-gas charges by the police. The president referred to the elections as the 'Festival of Democracy', and the atmosphere in the street marches was closer to that of a football crowd than a political rally. There were party T-shirts and bandannas, party pop songs, and the sky above the flyovers was full of kites.

My friend Jonathan made ravishing films of the rallies. The dominant colours - red, yellow or green - gave them a medieval quality, like battle scenes from the films of Kurosawa. In Jakarta, the newspapers kept a count of 'campaign-related deaths' which, by the official reckoning, were always the result of traffic accidents rather than political unrest. But every few days, stories filtered through of more sinister trouble in other cities and other provinces - East Java, Sulawesi, Madura Island. The morning after the tumultuous final day of the election campaign, I flew to one of these cities, Banjarmasin in southern Borneo, where grim news had been reported the day before.

Taxi drivers at the airport were reluctant to go into town. Even on its outskirts I could smell smoke, and a Protestant church at its centre was still burning after twenty-four hours. An entire slum block had been destroyed, and the rioters had set fire to the offices of the ruling party, a dozen shops and cinemas, and the best hotel in town. In the big shopping centre, 132 bodies were found. A police colonel from Jakarta told me that they were looters, trapped by their own fire, though others said that they were victims of the military who had been murdered elsewhere and covertly dumped in the burning building. I saw two of these bodies in the hospital mortuary. They were burned beyond recognition, their skulls cracked by the heat.

As I was preparing to leave Banjarmasin, I glanced at the map of Borneo and noticed a name in the province of West Kalimantan: Pontianak - the place where Jonathan had filmed the photograph of the severed head. Borneo is vast, and the two cities are hundreds of miles apart. But the Chinese travel agent in the hotel was enthusiastic: Pontianak was a splendid city, he said, with a large Chinese population. He quickly fixed the flights, and gave me the telephone number of a friend who could act as my guide there.

From the plane, West Kalimantan was flat and regular, but cut through with exciting rivers of chocolate brown. There were naked patches in the jungle, and thin lines of smoke rose from invisible fires. Through the porthole I saw metal roofs and boats, and more brown river water. Then the plane banked and I was looking at jungle again, then at an airport in the jungle.

The city below me was Pontianak (the word means 'evil spirit'); it lies on the Equator (dead on it, according to my map). Things learned about the Equator as a child came back to me, such as the way the direction of water going down the plughole reverses when you cross it. I caught myself thinking about ways of testing this - perhaps in different hotels, one north, one south. Then the plane tilted down and began its descent towards the centre of the earth.

Two

My knowledge of Borneo was vague. I seemed to remember that it was the second biggest island in the world. I thought of jungles, of course, and of copperplate encounters between European explorers in canoes and cannibal chieftains. I thought of a poster which I had seen as a child, featuring a wrestler known as the Wild Man of Borneo. I

found myself trying to remember if the adventures of Tintin had ever taken him there. At the airport, I bought a glossy guidebook and recalled what I had heard in Jakarta.

In February, rumours had filtered through of fighting between two ethnic groups, the Dayaks and the Madurese.

The Dayaks were the original inhabitants of Borneo, famous during the nineteenth century as the archetypal Victorian 'savages'. For thousands of years, before the arrival of the Dutch and the British, they had dominated the immense island. They were a scattered collection of tribes who lived in communal longhouses, practised a form of animism, and survived by hunting and by slash-and-burn agriculture.

More titillating, to the Victorian mind, was the promiscuity held to be rampant in the longhouses, and the practice of 'male enhancement' - the piercing of the penis with a metal pin. Dayak warriors increased their prestige, and brought good luck to their villages, by collecting the heads of rival tribes in formalised, set piece raids. Certain of the victims' organs, including the heart, brains and blood, were believed to bestow potency on those who consumed them, and the heads were preserved and worshipped in elaborate rituals. 'Beautiful young girls,' my guidebook informed me, 'would snatch up the heads and use the grisly trophies as props in a wild and erotic burlesque.'

The Dayaks' bloodier traditions were outlawed by the Christian colonists; since 1945 they had been full citizens of the Republic of Indonesia. My guidebook contained photographs of old people in beaded headdresses and men in loincloths clutching blowpipes, but they had about them the glazed neatness of tourist entertainments. 'These days Dayaks keep their penis pins and tattoos well hidden beneath jeans and T-shirts,' I read. 'Apart from a few villages in the interior, the longhouses have been replaced by simple homes of wood and plaster.'

The Madurese, I had heard several times, were 'the Sicilians of Indonesia'; educated Jakartans smiled wearily and shook their heads when they spoke of them. Madura was a dry, barren island off the east coast of Java, the frequent beneficiary of the government's programme of subsidised 'transmigration' to the more fertile territories of the outer archipelago. Its inhabitants had a national reputation for coarseness, armed violence and an uncompromising form of Islam. I had heard them blamed for church burnings, attacks on Christians, and several riots during the election campaign. Everywhere they settled, the Madurese had become the neighbours that nobody wanted.

As transmigrants, they were accused of thievery and thuggishness, but their differences with the Dayaks ran deeper than that. The Madurese were proud bearers of curved sickles; Dayak tradition abhorred the public flaunting of blades. The Dayaks hunted and reared pigs; the Madurese were strict Muslims. Violence had been breaking out between the two groups since the first Madurese arrived in West Kalimantan a century before. But nothing had ever been seen like the events of the previous months.

I had a cutting from the *Asia Times* of 20 February 1997. It was headlined FIGHT TO THE DEATH FOR TRIBAL RIGHTS.

It's been two generations since the last reports of headhunting by the Dayak, one of the most feared tribes in Southeast Asia. Now one of Indonesia's oldest societies is running amok and returning to its brutal traditions.

The Madurese, a migrant ethnic group from the island of Madura, east of Java, are bearing the brunt of the Dayaks' anger, fueled not only by cultural conflicts but by political and economic discontent. Following several clashes between the two groups, Madurese have watched dozens of their settlements

northeast of Pontianak, the capital of West Kalimantan, burn to the ground.

The burnings and killings continue. Despite repeated government announcements that the area is safe, the Dayak and Indonesian army roadblocks still stand. There is widespread fear that violence, even in Pontianak, can break out anytime.

'This is a time bomb. It can explode at any minute,' said one Dayak.

A government estimate of a few hundred dead was quoted. 'Local Christian church leaders' were said to put them 'in the thousands'. The author of the article, a woman from Sumatra, was a friend of Jonathan; her visit to West Kalimantan, he told me, had left her badly scared. 'At a roadblock the next day - during a 300km journey my companion and I encountered 32 roadblocks -' she wrote, 'an old Dayak man with a rifle asked: "Are you Madurese? I want to drink some Madurese blood."'

But her article made no explicit reference to the most striking fact about the war in West Kalimantan. For the Dayaks had not merely driven out and killed their Madurese neighbours. They had ritually decapitated them, carried off their heads as trophies and eaten their hearts and livers.

Months later, when the forests were burning and money had become worthless, the killings in Borneo seemed like a portent, the first faint rumbling of a catastrophe that would overtake the entire country. At the time, though, they went virtually unreported. Jonathan had heard vague stories about the violence in February; a few days later, he flew over to Pontianak with a small group of foreign journalists based in Jakarta. They checked into the city's one good hotel, the same one to which I was heading. Its lounge, restaurant and karaoke bar were full of poorly disguised

military spies, the men known to everyone as Intels. The next day, they hired a driver and a jeep, and drove north out of Pontianak. There were soldiers on the streets, and checkpoints every few miles with spikes and mines spread across the road. They got through the first few by waving press passes, or by pretending to be tourists.

At a village called Salatiga, they saw the first signs of destruction: dozens of burned, skeletal houses. They pulled over, but after the cameraman started filming, a group of soldiers appeared, angry and nervous. Calls were made to headquarters, and the cameraman's tapes were confiscated (though a few had been hastily concealed in the jeep). Back in Pontianak, they were held for several hours and then released, with orders not to wander outside the city itself.

They spent the evening in the bar of the hotel, watching the Intel men get drunk and sing karaoke.

The next day they talked to people in Pontianak, and realised for the first time how little of the full story had reached Jakarta. There had been massacres, people said, in most of the villages in the interior. First, the Madurese had attacked the Dayaks, then the Dayaks had taken revenge. They assembled from all over Kalimantan, ritually summoned by an artifact known as the 'Red Bowl'. Then they had systematically purged the villages of Madurese settlers, burning their houses and hunting them down.

The Dayaks' magic made them invulnerable to bullets, people said. They could identify the Madurese by their smell. A woman from Salatiga claimed to have looked out of her window and seen a man walking down the road carrying a head impaled on a stick. A journalist on a local magazine had a photograph of a severed head - the photograph which Jonathan would use in his film.

The Dayaks were trying to get through to Pontianak where thousands of Madurese were living as refugees. The army was protecting the Madurese and, it was said, killing Dayaks. According to the official count three hundred

people had died. It was obvious that the true figure was far, far higher.

Everyone was scared of something: the Madurese of the Dayaks, the Dayaks of the army, and the army and the local government of the terrible trouble which this was going to cause back in Jakarta. Military reinforcements had been flown in from Java, and the hospitals were under guard.

The Intels followed Jonathan and his friends everywhere they went, and people were afraid to talk to them. After a couple more nights of karaoke, they flew back to Jakarta.

That was three months ago. Since then, there had been no more reports of significant trouble, and these days everyone in Jakarta was preoccupied with the election. An extraordinary thing had taken place, and passed by with no more than a glance from the outside world: an ethnic war of scarcely imaginable savagery, fought according to principles of black magic, a couple of hours' drive from a modern city of banks, hotels and airports.

Three

The morning after arriving in Pontianak, I drove out of the city with my guide, a Chinese man named Budi who always wore black shoes, black trousers and a white shirt.

We crossed Pontianak's two rivers, where the seagoing schooners docked, glistening and curved like great white ice-cream scoops, and where the riverboats began the long chug to the interior. The outskirts of the town were dominated by water, and wide ditches divided the houses from the road and from one another. Bouncing planks were laid across them; some families even kept tiny tublike boats moored by their front doors. We passed the Equator monument, a strange black sculpture of concentric hoops, and drove north along a crisp new road unrolled like a carpet on an underlay of dusty red earth.

Budi could tell at a glance which houses were Dayak and which were Madurese, by the arrangement of the stilts, the direction of the windows, and the presence or absence of batik decorations above the door. His English was as crisp as his clothes; he could put a date or a number to everything. As we drove north, he told me what he knew about the struggle between the Dayaks and the Madurese. He had no hesitation in calling it a war.

It had begun at the very end of the previous year in a town called Sanggauledo, close to the border with Malaysian Sarawak. A stage had been specially built for a live performance of *dangdut*, the bouncy, Indian-influenced pop music adored all over Indonesia. At some point during the course of the evening, two Dayak women had been bothered by a pair of Madurese boys. A fight broke out, the Madurese brandished their sickles, and a young Dayak, the son of the local village head, was stabbed. Scared and outnumbered, the Madurese took refuge in the local military outpost, where a delegation of Dayaks quickly presented themselves, demanding that the two be handed over. The soldiers refused, so they walked to the nearest Madurese enclave and set it on fire. 'Nine hundred and ninety-eight houses were burned,' Budi said. 'Some of them were completely destroyed.'

Tension between the two races had been building for years; there had been a similar spasm of violence a decade before. But this time, as news of the latest stabbing spread from Sanggauledo, there were revenge attacks on Madurese living in the interior. Within a few days the government in Pontianak got together a group of Dayak and Madurese leaders and drew up a 'treaty' to end the fighting.

Over the years the Madurese had not been the only objects of the Dayaks' fury. During the Second World War, they had been recruited by both sides in the fighting between the Japanese and the Allies. Twenty years later,

during the great bloodletting of the mid-1960s, they had turned on the Chinese of Kalimantan. Budi was old enough to remember that time, but he spoke warmly of the Dayaks.

‘Inside, I am pro-Dayak,’ he said. ‘They are good people, very gentle, they don’t cause trouble for no one. They want to be left alone. But they are lazy. My brother works with Dayaks in his office, and if you leave them alone they will sit there all day talking and smiling. Their IQ is very low, unfortunately.’

Even from our brief acquaintance I knew that Budi worked from seven o’clock in the morning until midnight every day. I suspected that, through his eyes, the world was a very lazy place.

For an hour the jungle had been close on either side, broken up by the occasional lonely hut and wooden stands selling cigarettes and Coke. Now there were houses on both sides of the road, and suddenly we were in a small town of concrete offices and bright, dusty shop signs. Right in its centre was a fire-gutted house, flanked on both sides by undamaged buildings. Budi was not sure what this meant. ‘This town has a reputation for burning down houses,’ he said. ‘By accident. Maybe they are careless with matches.’

I was looking for the town’s priests, friends of an anthropologist in Pontianak, and witnesses, I was told, to much of the worst violence. On the outskirts, we followed a trail of schoolchildren to a tin-roofed church and a school, built of flaking planks on low stilts, which stood back from the road. The schoolmaster was locking up for the afternoon, and he guided us around the corner to the house of Father Anselmus and Father Andreas.

They were young priests, Dayaks in their late twenties, who had studied at a Catholic seminary in Java. But apart from a crucifix nailed to one wall, there was nothing remotely priestly about their bungalow. The main room

contained a shelf of novels, a table of ashtrays and discarded fruit peel, and a wide TV connected to a dish on the roof. On the walls were a painting of a volcano, a Dayak shield and scabbard, and a dry marker board, bearing a scrawled list of dates and appointments in Indonesian and the following words of English:

Don't forget to show the champion's final
on Thursday, May 28 (dawn)
Borussia Dortmund vs Juventus!

Next to the board was a five-foot-high cut-out of Father Christmas.

Andreas was bearded and sleepy-eyed, with a dazed grin. He smoked lots of the clove cigarettes called *kretek* which he held between three fingers, as if he didn't quite know what to make of them. Anselmus was taller and more talkative, and gave the impression of being a bit too muscular and handsome for this kind of life.

They were the first Dayaks I had encountered and I expected to be met with wariness and reserve - in the car, Budi and I had rehearsed a reassuring preamble emphasising the seriousness of my intentions, and the confidentiality with which any information would be treated. It was quite unnecessary with these two, who reminded me more than anything of certain friends in London, aimless well-meaning bachelors resigned to the light duties of dole-claiming, TV-watching and smoking. They welcomed us immediately; there was always coffee and fruit on the table, and after a few days it became natural, almost routine, to drop round at Anselmus and Andreas's house for durian or rambutan and a conversation about headhunting and cannibalism.

They took up the story where Budi had left off.

The 'peace treaty' had been signed by the Dayak and Madurese leaders in mid-January, but even before the end of the month the violence had begun again. On 29 January, news spread of two Dayak girls, former pupils at Anselmus and Andreas's school, who had been lying in bed in a suburb of Pontianak, when two Madurese men broke in. The girls were molested; their nightdresses were cut with sickles. Anticipating another round of revenge attacks, a mob of Madurese gathered on the road that led from Pontianak to the Dayak interior.

By four o'clock in the afternoon, a thousand people armed with sickles had assembled, old men and children among them. But no Dayaks appeared. The mob grew impatient and burned down a Dayak house. Then they began stopping cars and demanding to see the occupants' papers.

They set up a roadblock in the town of Peniraman, where a family was driving back from a daughter's university graduation ceremony. Their jeep was stopped and the five occupants were dragged out. All but a child and a young woman were cut down on the spot. Andreas conducted the funeral of a young man named Alun, whose head had been almost severed by the sickles. The body of an old man, a village elder named Nyuncat, was found later in the jungle.

Word of the atrocities passed around the Dayak villages. The more they killed, the more convinced the Madurese became that retaliation was imminent, and the more inclined to pre-empt it with their own violence. On 29 January half a dozen Dayak houses had been burned in the village of Senakin. On the following morning, the Madurese in Paci Karang were attacked by Dayaks. That afternoon, Madurese threw stones at a Dayak bus in Seke. The next day, Andreas saw Dayaks burning down Madurese houses in Seke, which had already been abandoned.

'In the afternoon in Paci I saw dead bodies on the road without heads and without hearts,' said Andreas. Both the