

THE SILENT LANGUAGE IN THE ABSOLUTE SPEED

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ABSTRACT

This paper utilizes Edward T. Hall's silent-language to analyze "Apakabar", a mailing-list that was a phenomenon in the political chaos of Indonesia around May 1998. The talk of Indonesian taboo occurred in a digital space where the absolute speed was put to work. Through the current revolution in data transport and information processing, within the high-context of the nation's atmosphere at that time, the words on the computer screen therefore were richly filled with its agency's behavior, setting, and the 'uttered' speech. The discussion proposed in the paper will be picturing the 'language' people used on the list.

The aim of this paper is picturing the 'language' people used in 'Apakabar,' a social researchers mailing-list on the net that became a phenomenon politically during 1998, when Indonesia experienced the biggest turmoil ever by the people power over Soeharto the President of the Republic of Indonesia at that time. The basic work of 'language' here is from Edward T. Hall who concerned about the behavior, setting, and culture that occurred in human interaction.

The paper will begin with a brief description on the political situation of the nation during 1998 and will continue by focusing to the what and who of Apakabar since its very beginning in 1990 to its part on the people movement in 1998. The discussion of agency's behavior, context, and the 'uttered' speech in this absolute speed of data transport will follow.

A BRIEF LOOK TO THE NATION

Soeharto ruled the country of Indonesia from 1966 to 1998. Three decades in power allowed him not only to influence but also to decide the form and substance of the nation. After the death of Soekarno (Indonesia's first president) in 1970, Soeharto destroyed the communism and marxism in Indonesia. With the help of his military friends and civil technocrats, he brought the people to the new way of modernism: development, as he considered himself a rational pragmatist who tried to end the romanticism of ideology. Modernity for these people was a goal of practical and incremental steps: stabilizing the market, renovating physical infrastructures, creating a more productive agriculture, pushing the industry ahead, giving jobs to people, improving education, and increasing the production per capita. And to achieve this goal, Soeharto built an authoritarian democracy with the army in its core. He put the people in the system so they were involved in the nation's mission of development. The national legislative election was held every 5 years with process of election, political parties, court, and media being controlled by the government to avoid the system being ruled by other than Soeharto.

Centralization of power in Soeharto's regime began in 1974 when he allowed a national regulation on Regional Government to formalize the domination of Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia. Here, he managed to have a tremendous reorganization in the body of military forces. He put regional

general under the command of the army from the central power (Jakarta). He also raised military persons to be regional governors and mayors of the cities. The new regulation said that the regional government should be responsible not to its own constituency but to the central government in Jakarta. This way, he made sure that there would never be regional rebellions.

The characteristic of Indonesian state here then stressed at the elite factionalism and the personalistic use of governmental power. Being the most powerful person in the nation, coming from Javanese, the biggest ethnic group in the country, Soeharto put his personal way of living into the way of running the state. Soeharto ran a traditional patrimonial system in which, as seen by Weber, “the object obedience is the personal authority of the individual which he enjoys by virtue of his traditional status. The organised group exercising authority is, in the simple case, primarily based on relations of personal loyalty, cultivated through a common process of education. The person exercising authority is not a ‘superior,’ but a personal ‘chief.’ His administrative staff does not consist primarily of officials, but of personal retainers. . . . What determines the relations of the administrative staff to the chief is not the impersonal obligations of office, but personal loyalty to the chief.”

The network of patron-clients thus extended all the way ‘from the palace to the village.’ The personal bond between Soeharto went to the individual governmental leader and the influentials whom he appointed to positions of power within the state machinery. This patron-client relationship was not restricted on a one-to-one basis only. Soeharto needed communal clienteles to maintain his political control. He would allow his dependents a good will, protection, and material resources, as long as they promoted a sense of communal solidarity and a mobilization of active political support. The influentials thus had their own retinue of followers bound to them by similar bond of personal loyalty. This went as a chain of power all the way down from the big cities to the village. Here, political relationships were perceived as non-conflictual hierarchies of clientage. The state was therefore a patrimonial one, a governmental apex of a society characterized by traditional or better to say, a neo-patrimonialism, a contemporary patron-client relationship.

Groups of elite thus emerged. They had privilege on everything that was agreed by Soeharto, or at least their patron. This occurred especially to the family of Soeharto. Hutomo Mandala Putra or Tommy as he was usually called, his youngest son, owned and monopolized a local made sedan license. Soeharto’s first daughter, Siti Hardiyanti Rukmana, owned a public toll-road company that managed the whole toll-road in Jakarta. These only a very small part of their properties as they also owned most of the media. Of course, they needed this fourth power.

These people played high-risk games with great values. The law could not reach them as they always had something else to oppose and their patron to protect them. However, when the game cost a regional financial crisis, layers of problems arose. Lack of food, currency’s falling, student killings by troops, plundering in riots, were problems that came one after the other intensively. The elite circle needed to face the result. And when people power got strong and stronger, all patrons had to choose whether they wanted to be on loyalty like before or just went with the big mass flow against their own patron.

APAKABAR LIST OF POWER

On October 07, 1990, John A. MacDougall, an American citizen based in Maryland, USA, created a list-serve ‘Reg. Indonesia’ (Regional Indonesia) as a continuing idea of the ‘Indonesia Publications,’ a company that produced and marketed high quality researches and articles about ‘Indonesia Today.’ The list then changed the name to ‘Apakabar’ (meaning: “how do you do” or “how’s life” or “what’s up” or just “hello”), by the moderation of John A. MacDougall himself. All messages went

to his computer first before he sent it through the public list. However, he hardly left any message in his provider. He presented messages with all point of views, radicals or moderates, from the NGO activists to statesmen. Language use did not matter. People could go on slang or formal.

By amount of postings, I noticed there were 3 (three) big incidents happened that the community of 'Apakabar' had much of the talk. There were (1) the ban of the leading weekly political magazine 'Tempo,' 'DeTIK' political tabloid and 'Editor' magazine, on June 21st 1994, (2) the battering down of PDI office (Indonesian Democratic Party, led by the daughter of Soekarno the 1st Indonesian President) on July 27th 1996, and (3) the resignation of Soeharto as the President of Indonesia on May 21st, 1998.

The Ban of the Media

Although the government did not state it verbally, people knew that the ban of the 3 (three) media was caused by their reports on the detail news about an internal government row over the high cost of purchasing warships from the former East-German navy, responsible by BJ Habibie, the minister of technology at that time, who was a close confidante of President Soeharto.

The ban led to public protests. From individuals to overseas news agencies who considered this incident as a deterioration to free journalism in Indonesia. The government stated that the ban was given for the administration fault that DeTIK and Editor had, and substance report that Tempo released which put the nation in 'instability.'

MacDougall re-posted both the news and public opinions. Sometimes, he changed the subject line from personal message 'what happens in Jakarta?' into a more common subject 'Antara English Version Muzzling' (Antara is Indonesian news agency). This personal message from Tatic, an Indonesian woman living in England, sent to MacDougall (Apakabar list) as a forwarded message from Bayu, an Indonesian man living in Jakarta, who put the petition 'Urgent Action' from the Indonesian Legal Aid Institute.

YLBHI Urgent Action Appeal

From: apakabar@clark.net

Date: Wed Jun 22 1994 - 06:20:00 EDT

From: John MacDougall <apakabar@clark.net>

(...detail of message header deleted...)

From elawjakarta Wed Jun 22 04:35:03 1994

(...detail of message header deleted...)

Date: Wed, 22 Jun 1994 04:35:03 -0700

From: Mas Achmed Santosa <elawjakarta>

Message-Id: <199406221135.EAA21801@igc.apc.org>

Subject: banning

URGENT ACTION

Jakarta 22 June, 1994

THE INDONESIAN LEGAL AID INSTITUTE - Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia (YLBHI)

PRINTING AND PUBLISHING LICENCES OF TEMPO, EDITOR AND DETIK CANCELED

On behalf of the Indonesian people, we appeal for urgent action to be taken in solidarity to show that the international community shares the anger of the Indonesian people over the brutality naked power used by the Soeharto regime which executed the Indonesian press on June 21, 1994 namely the cancellation of the printing and publishing licences, and therefore their freedom to operate, of the magazines TEMPO and EDITOR and the tabloid DETIK.

THE GOVERNMENT STATEMENT

Yesterday afternoon, on June 21, the government announced the cancellation of the printing and publishing licences (Surat Izin Usaha Penerbitan Pers, SIUPP) of the three publications. The stated reasons given by the regime were published Ministry of Information Decree (Surat Keputusan Menteri Keterangan) numbers 123/1994 - TEMPO, 124/1994 - EDITOR and 125/1994 - Detik.

Printing and Publishing licence - EDITOR

Licence date: 22 June 1987

Reason given: 1. Repeatedly reminded over the content of articles;
2. The licence was issued in the name of the previous editors of the publishing company who are no longer with EDITOR.

Violation : 1. Ministerial Decree PPG No 03/1993
10 August 1993;
2. Ministry of Information Decree No 01/1984,
Paragraph 33, sections a and b.

Printing and Publishing licence - DETIK

Licence : Number 043 17 February 1986

Reason given: DETIK diverted from its stated goals of reporting and information.

Violation : Ministry of Information Decree No 01/1984,
Paragraph 33, sections a and b.

Printing and Publishing licence - TEMPO

Licence : Number 76/1982

Reason given: 1. Repeatedly reminded over the content of articles;
2. TEMPO printed a number of articles which did not conform with the guidelines on the national press;

3. The content of the articles were not in accordance with a free, healthy and responsible press.

Violation : Not stated

In response to the announcement of these cancellations, we present the following PETITION OF PROTEST:

1. legally and constitutionally, the cancellation of these printing and publishing licences is invalid and is in conflict with the contents and spirit of the 1945 Constitution, in particular paragraph 28 and does not reflect the spirit of Regulation Number 21/1984 regarding stipulations on the national press which among other things, in paragraph 4 states that with regard to the national press they cannot be censored or muzzled.

According to Ministry of Information Decree Number 01/Per/Menpen/1984, Paragraph 33h, pertaining to the cancellation of printing and publishing licences, this can only be carried out in the case of a publication which no longer reflects the healthy life of the press, a press which is free and responsible, while these publications, according to the assessment of Indonesian society have not violated this principle.

2. The cancellation of the TEMPO, EDITOR and DETIK printing licences is a "disaster" for the process of democratisation which requires as a condition the existence of real rights to express opinions both verbally and in writing, as well as becoming a "historical flaw" in the life of the national press.

In the social and political life which internally, is coloured by strong demands for openness (keterbukaan) and externally is under pressure to develop a democratic political system, the cancellation of the printing and publishing licences of the mass media is a "step backwards" which must be accounted for both legally and politically.

3. Legally, if it is viewed that a violation of the limits of the freedom of the press has occurred, the cancellation of the printing and publishing licences is a unilateral policy, and gives no opportunity to the press to conduct a defence, as well as needing an admission of the principles of the process of making an assessment of the limits of press freedom in a "state based upon law" which must be carried out through the "court process".

DEMANDS

Based upon this and the social and political impact on democratic life in general, and the life of the press in particular, we demand:

1. The cancellation of the printing and publishing licences of TEMPO, EDITOR and DETIK be immediately revoked;
2. That the Indonesian government give a justification of this anti-democratic attack;
3. The withdrawal of regulation Number 21/1984 regarding stipulations on the national press.

PLEASE SEND PROTESTS TO:

1. M. Soeharto
President of Indonesia
Istana Negara
Jl Veteran
Jakarta Pusat

2. General Feisal Tanjung
Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces
MABES ABRI
Cilangkap
Jakarta Timor 5015
Phone: (62-21) 342 679, 840 1243, 840 1240

3. M. Harmoko
Minister of Information
Jl. Medan Merdeka Barat No 9
Jakarta Pusat
Phone: (62-21) 345 3999, 384 9536

This petition became a ‘waking-up call’ for some journalists (or ex-journalists of Tempo, DeTIK and Editor) and the activists of some political NGOs. As huge responds attacked and jammed the fax machines at the offices of the President, the Head of Military Forces, and the Minister of Information, these journalists and activists realized the power of the Internet. Say, by one sending to a list-serve, people power ‘spoke’ to the top men in authority. And it worked not only to the people of the country, it also gained the world attention to the subject on the hot seat. The ‘underground’ online news then began.

The Battering Down of PDI Headquarter

Saturday, 27 of July 1996, ‘Apakabar’ was in the crowd again. MacDougall forwarded a chronological report he took from Tempo Interaktif (Interactive Tempo which was the ‘replacement’ of Tempo printed magazine that did not have the permit yet to re-publish) subjected ‘TEMPO – PDI Diserbu, Jakarta Rusuh’ (TEMPO – PDI was attacked, Jakarta restless).

Megawati Soekarno Putri, daughter of the 1st President of Indonesia who led the political party of Indonesian democracy (PDI – Partai Demokrasi Indonesia) had always been a threat for the government since her father had a deep charisma that still attracted many individuals. The attack of PDI’s headquarter was caused by the people who believed that Megawati was not supposed to be the leader of PDI anymore since participants in the previous meeting, that was not attended by Megawati, already voted for Soerjadi as the new leader.

These people battered the gate down and forced to get inside. They smashed and burned things, and made some people wounded. Blood was everywhere and the buildings next door were also on fire. The army that came to help was bitten by the mass. Platform for free speech was formed near the police station, close to the burning headquarter, attended by thousands of people.

This incident called for the world attention, too. MacDougall forwarded message from Carmel Budiardjo who sent a BBC broadcast. And it was interesting to read the last paragraph between parentheses.

BBC: Pitched Battles in Jakarta
From: tapol@gn.apc.org
Date: Sat Jul 27 1996 - 12:40:00 EDT

From: Carmel Budiardjo <tapol>

/* Written 12:39 PM Jul 27, 1996 by tapol in gn:act.indonesia */
/* ----- "BBC: pitched battles in Jakarta" ----- */
BBC: pitched battles in Jakarta

The following report was broadcast on BBC World Service at 12 noon, London time, Saturday, 27 July:

...troops have attacked the headquarters of the opposition Indonesian Democratic Party. Eye-witnesses said demonstrators set fire to several buildings, including one housing military personnel and that buses and cars were also set alight. Riot police and soldiers charged several thousand stone-throwing demonstrators. Earlier about two thousand police stormed the party headquarters after a pitched battle with supporters of the former party leader, Megawati Sukarnoputri had occupied the building after she was ousted by a breakaway faction supported by the government. Jonathan Head reports from Jakarta:

Several hundred youths who had gathered near the PDI headquarters since early this morning, hurled rocks and set up barricades against the troops trying to disperse them. Two water cannons moved slowly down the street, spraying the demonstrators with a pink chemical.

I saw one police bus with its windscreen smashed in and several buildings were damaged. A large column of smoke rose from a military building lying close to the battered PDI headquarters.

The troops are clearly finding it difficult to contain the demonstrators as they move from one street to another, while setting up new positions. There's a palpable sense of anger among Indonesians that I spoke to over the way the authorities stormed the PDI headquarters this morning.

At least two thousand soldiers and police, backed up by civilians, broke down the gate and attacked the Megawati supporters inside. The number of injuries is still unclear. One PDI official told me the soldiers had taken 42 people to hospital although no one has yet been allowed to see them.

Last month the government arranged the expulsion of Megawati Sukarnoputri, a popular daughter of Indonesia's first president, as leader of the PDI, Several hundred of her supporters had been occupying the PDI headquarters until this morning 's operation.

[Please note that we have every reason to believe that the water cannons used are those supplied by a UK company, which were on the streets during a PDI demonstration in Jakarta on 20 June. A photograph of the vehicle was published in last Sunday's Observer.]

MacDougall also posted messages that came from insiders of the government and military forces. These message were formed under subject of GOSIP which did not mention anything about the senders, except the e-address of MacDougall only. This no senders' e-addresses or identification told us that MacDougall ran into the long way of encryption to hide his participants' identities and save their life away from the threat.

IN: GOSIP - Soeharto & ABRI
From: apakabar@clark.net
Date: Sat Jul 27 1996 - 13:49:00 EDT

From: John MacDougall <apakabar@clark.net>
Received: (from apakabar@localhost) by explorer2.clark.net (8.7.1/8.7.1) id QAA04647 for reg.indonesia@conf.igc.apc.org; Sat, 27 Jul 1996 16:45:09 -0400 (EDT)

Forwarded message:
From owner-indonesia-l@igc.org Sat Jul 27 16:26 EDT 1996
Content-Transfer-Encoding: 8bit
Date: Sat, 27 Jul 1996 15:10:13 -0400 (EDT)
From: apakabar@clark.net
MIME-Version: 1.0
Message-Id: <199607271910.PAA06123@explorer2.clark.net>
Subject: IN: GOSIP - Soeharto & ABRI
To: apakabar@clark.net
X-Mailer: ELM [version 2.4 PL24alpha3]
Sender: owner-indonesia-l@igc.apc.org
Precedence: bulk
Content-Type: text/plain; charset=ISO-8859-1
Content-Length: 13318

INDONESIA-L

Date: Sun, 28 Jul 1996 01:24:43 -0700
To: apakabar@clark.net
Subject: IN: Gossip - ABRI Sibuk Mencari Kambing Hitam

GOSSIP

Boleh Percaya, Boleh tidak. Tapi sumbernya 'orang dalam' lho!!
(Believe it. Believe it not. But the source is from the 'insider,' man!!)

ABRI SIBUK CARI 'KAMBING HITAM'

(ABRI Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia – Indonesian Military Forces, busy in searching the 'scapegoat')

....

(This message was a very long inside story about how Soeharto challenged his top men in the military forces when he was not in the country. He used Megawati's defense to create the 'common enemy' and get more supporters on his side.)

The Resignation of Soeharto as President of Indonesia

Getting close to May 21st 1998, 'Apakabar' became a virtual battlefield for its participants. Every incident happened in the physical world was discussed and argued with hard and harsh words. MacDougall posted almost all messages that came into his e-address, no matter what political view each participant had.

The death of 6 (six) college students who were 'shot by the army in the campus area' created another hype online. Not only the Indonesians, living in and outside the country, but students of Burma also sent their protest and support to Indonesian students, relating it to the students' incident that Burma had years ago.

[INDONESIA-L] KOLOM - PIJAR (banyak tulisan)

From: apakabar@clark.net
Date: Wed May 13 1998 - 12:13:00 EDT

Forwarded message:

From apakabar@clark.net Wed May 13 15:10:26 1998
Date: Wed, 13 May 1998 13:07:51 -0600 (MDT)
Message-Id: <199805131907.NAA08322@indopubs.com>
To: indonesia-l@indopubs.com
From: apakabar@clark.net
Subject: [INDONESIA-L] KOLOM - PIJAR (banyak tulisan)
Sender: owner-indonesia-l@indopubs.com

... deleted ...

PIJAR Indonesia

Jl. Pedati 104b (RT 7/10), Jatinegara, Jakarta Timur 13330 INDONESIA
mailto:pijar@USA.NET
<http://www.uni-stuttgart.de/indonesia/pijar>

Ph. +62 21 850 2636

Kabar dari Pijar

Subject: KdP: Mahasiswa Burma Protes Pembunuhan Mahasiwa Trisakti

Media Release

13 May 1998

ABSDF CONDEMNS KILLING OF INDONESIAN STUDENTS

The All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF) condemns the killing yesterday of six Indonesian students in Jakarta who were demonstrating peacefully against the Indonesian government.

The six students were killed after Indonesian police opened fire on some 5,000 demonstrators at Trisakti University in central Jakarta. Many more people were reported injured, some with gunshot wounds.

The ABSDF condemns the killings and the action of the authorities, and fully supports the right of the students and other citizens to stage peaceful protests.

The ABSDF also calls on the Indonesian government to allow peaceful demonstrations to take place; and to prevent any further violations carried out by the police and security forces. The organisation also calls on ASEAN member states to raise these concerns with the Indonesian government.

The All Burma Students' Democratic Front was formed following the August 1988 uprising in Burma in which thousands of people were killed by the army in response to nationwide anti-government demonstrations. Tens of thousands of people joined in the student-led demonstrations in which people called for democracy and human rights in Burma.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CALL 01 654 4984.

For plenty of incidents happened in Indonesia, and bulk of supports to Indonesian people coming from around the world, Soeharto was pushed to the corner and resigned. As The Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition put it on May 21st 1998:

[INDONESIA-L] WSJ - Habibie Only Transitional

From: apakabar@clark.net

Date: Wed May 20 1998 - 20:26:00 EDT

Forwarded message:

From apakabar@clark.net Wed May 20 23:26:53 1998

Date: Wed, 20 May 1998 21:25:09 -0600 (MDT)

Message-Id: <199805210325.VAA20090@indopubs.com>

To: indonesia-l@indopubs.com

From: apakabar@clark.net

Subject: [INDONESIA-L] WSJ - Habibie Only Transitional, Cabinet Abandoned Soeharto
The Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition -- May 21, 1998

Indonesian President Suharto

Resigns After 32 Years in Power

An INTERACTIVE JOURNAL News Roundup

Indonesian President Suharto resigned Thursday morning, ending his 32 years as head of the world's fourth most-populous nation.

Mr. Suharto was succeeded by the current vice president, Baharuddin Jusuf Habibie. Mr. Habibie is expected to lead a transitional government for around six months after Mr. Suharto resigns, until new elections are held.

As civil unrest continued to rock Indonesia earlier, several senior Cabinet members reportedly handed in their resignations, demanding Mr. Suharto step down immediately.

"It is time for us to say goodbye to our national leader who has for 32 years has ruled the country," said opposition leader Amien Rais, Indonesia's most prominent Suharto critic.

On Wednesday, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright strongly implied the embattled leader should step down. And in Jakarta, tens of thousands of soldiers sealed off a park adjacent to the presidential palace with barbed wire and tanks.

Speaking at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Conn., Ms. Albright said the U.S. welcomed Mr. Suharto's pledge to allow Indonesia to have a democratic transition with elections. While she didn't explicitly call for his resignation, her comments represent the strongest language from the Clinton administration since the outbreak of antigovernment violence erupted in Indonesia last week.

One senior official said her statement was an appeal for Mr. Suharto's resignation, couched in diplomatic code words. Another official said Ms. Albright was merely calling for swift movement by Mr. Suharto to a democratic transition.

"President Suharto has given much to his country over the past 30 years, raising Indonesia's standing in the world and hastening Indonesia's economic growth and integration the global economy," Ms. Albright said. "Now he has the opportunity for a historic act of statesmanship, one that will preserve his legacy as a man who not only led his country but who provided for its democratic transition," she said.

In related news, a senior International Monetary Fund official said the fund will delay credit disbursements to Indonesia until the terms of a \$10.1 billion standby credit arrangement can be renegotiated. The social upheaval and political uncertainty surrounding the Suharto government will necessitate a delay in the previously planned disbursement on June 4 as "a practical matter," said Stanley Fischer, first deputy IMF managing director.

"If yesterday was a bad day to be clear about what is going to happen [in Indonesia], today is a worse day," Mr. Fischer said Wednesday.

"It's clear that we won't be able to move ahead [with further disbursements] until the political situation clarifies. That's the

basic situation," he added.

Wednesday in Jakarta, troops poured into the streets, helicopters swooped overhead and tanks lined up beside coiled wire and wooden barriers in a show of support for the 76-year-old autocrat.

Fearing bloodshed, Mr. Rais canceled an anti-Suharto rally planned for Wednesday, temporarily defusing protests escalating since the government imposed IMF-mandated austerity measures to stem the country's worst economic crisis in decades. Last week, Jakarta was rocked by rioting, looting and arson and more than 500 people were killed. The violence erupted after police fatally dead six students at an antigovernment protest May 12. Large but peaceful rallies and protest marches were held in several cities Wednesday.

Meanwhile, an advance copy of Thursday's edition of Indonesian national newspaper Kompas said several senior ministers in the Indonesian cabinet resigned late Wednesday, demanding Mr. Suharto's immediate resignation. Kompas also said it expects Mr. Suharto to hand over power to Habibie Thursday after announcing a new cabinet team to reform the country's political system.

The ministers, including the senior coordinating minister for economy, finance and industry, Ginandjar Kartasasmita, tendered their resignation to Suharto Wednesday evening in Jakarta, Kompas said. Finance Minister Fuad Bawazier wasn't among the ministers who resigned, the newspaper said. Mr. Ginandjar has 18 ministers in his department.

-- Raphael Pura, Richard Borsuk, Jay Solomon and Leslie Lopez and Eduardo Lachica in contributed to this article.

Sender: owner-indonesia-l@indopubs.com

Precedence: bulk

'Apakabar' was also filled with discussions and arguments in Indonesian language. Its root as the base for researchers of Indonesia with high quality articles, and its participants who came from high 'respected' area such as scholars, professional journalists, NGO activists, even military and government employees, allowed 'Apakabar' to be the news sources of other newsgroups or the preliminary information for further investigation. To prevent the arrest of military forces, most of participants of 'Apakabar' usually connected the net from the internet cafes. MacDougall assisted those who needed protection by eliminating their identities before he forwarded the messages to the list. There were time too that people asked his assistance to escape from the search of military forces.

IN: URGENT - Jusfiq Hadjar Arrested

From: apakabar@access.digex.net

Date: Wed Nov 22 1995 - 09:51:00 EST

From: John MacDougall <apakabar@access.digex.net>

Subject: IN: URGENT - Jusfiq Hadjar Arrested in Jakarta

Date: Wed, 22 Nov 1995 10:43:56 -0800

From: apakabar@clark.net

Subject: IN: URGENT - Jusfiq Hadjar Arrested in Jakarta

Sender: owner-indonesia-l@igc.apc.org

Note: Jusfiq has been a very active member of indonesia-l (apakabar), the online list I moderate which you are now reading. It is not inconceivable his arrest is related to this activity. Jusfiq is an outspoken and consistent advocate of democracy in Indonesia.

On behalf of Marlene van Doorn, his life partner in the Netherlands (doorn@rulfsw.leidenuniv.nl) and on my own behalf, may I ask that list subscribers in a position to do so:

- 1) make inquiries locally about his situation and those of the others arrested,
- 2) make the attached and any further information available through whatever appropriate channels are at your disposal,
- 3) contact the persons mentioned in the AI Urgent Action bulletin, plus others in a position to be of practical assistance in any way,
- 4) ensure that adequate legal representation remains available for all,
- 5) consider seeking direct access through visits to all those in custody,
- 6) try to achieve their early release and monitor their safety and legal status afterward once this occurs.

John A. MacDougall
Coordinator, Task Force Indonesia

/* Written 5:05 pm Nov 22, 1995 by ritchellai@gn.apc.org in gn:ai.uan */

/* ----- "AI EX145/95 INDONESIA Arrests" ----- */

+-----+
+ Paper reprints authorised. Electronic redistributors +
+ must request permission from Amnesty International. +
+ Contact: ritchellai@gn.apc.org (UK) +
+ sharrison@igc.apc.org (USA) +
+ ggabriel@amnesty.cl.sub.de (Germany) +
+-----+

EXTERNAL AI Index: ASA 21/56/95

EXTRA 145/95 Arbitrary Detention 22 November 1995

INDONESIA Yusfiq Hadjar, human rights activist, French national
Mindu Rajagukguk, human rights activist
Neti, trade unionist
and two others

Five people, including one foreign national, were arrested on 22 November 1995 in Jakarta. Amnesty International is concerned that the five appear to have been arbitrarily detained and that their arrest is an attack on peaceful human rights activities.

The five, Indonesian human rights activist Mindu Rajagukguk, French national human rights and pro-democracy activist, Yusfiq Hadjar, Neti, a labour activist with independent trade union, Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia (SBSI), and two others whose names are not

known, were arrested by police around 2pm in Jakarta. It is believed that the five were arrested after observing the trial of former politician Sri Bintang Pamungkas. They left the court, had lunch in a restaurant together, and were apparently arrested after leaving the restaurant. They are believed to have been taken first to a police station in Sawah Besar, Jakarta, and then transferred to the Police Area Command in Central Jakarta where they are currently being questioned by the police. It is not known whether they will be charged and they are believed to have been arrested without warrants. Independent lawyers are currently attempting to meet with them.

It is thought that the five were arrested because of the presence of Yusfiq Hadjar who is known as a human rights and political activist. Amnesty International is concerned that the five appear to have been arbitrarily detained for the peaceful exercise of their freedom of association.

... deleted ...

DISCUSSION

For Edward T. Hall, language was not consisted only words and sentences, or syntax and vocabulary. The linguistic code had to be in relation to the larger setting of the scientific field: the context in which each word, sentence, and paragraph was set. Defining the context was always important and it was frequently difficult. Here, information, context, and meaning were bound together in a balanced, functional relationship. The more information that was shared, the higher the context. Hall also stated that when people communicated, they did not only toss the communication ball back and forth. There was a huge context behind them that came out within the uttered words and the 'body language.' These contexts were ones of what Hall called the Silent Language.

In 'Apakabar' list, the 'uttered words' and the 'body language' of the interlocutors were one on the computer screen. Individual context comprehension then shifted to a wider/higher degree where the list was located (the area of 'dirty' truth in Indonesian politics). The participants did not look at who John A. MacDougall was. They concerned more to 'Apakabar' as a forum to get and spread information in a fastest way to a widest audience. The fact that MacDougall was an American who moderated the list from an advance service provider in America that served the world interaction in the absolute speed (as Paul Virilio called it), did not really put them on thought. There was another context that was more important to look at: the politic situation in the home country, Indonesia.

For the people of Indonesia, at least those who suffered from Soeharto's 32 years of ruling the nation, the politics heated up bit by bit. The media (or should I say the journalists) started it all. As the colony of Soeharto curbed the media for its substance and redaction by owning the media, the idealistic journalists seek every single way to get lost from them. The ban of three leading media in 1994 opened up the chance for free speech on the net. The green NGOs who already had a good IT's knowledge of networking internationally helped the journalists to set up local networks. Meanwhile, the underground printed flyers got more and more useful on spreading 'unwanted and illegal' news (from the perspective of the authority) to a wider community that could not be reached by the net.

When the financial crisis attacked Asia in 1997, Soeharto faced layers of problems concerning

politics, socials, and economics. His usual command to use military forces brought more troubles as his son-in-law who led the special force had different way in solving the problems. And along with this, many of his men in the decision-making level realized that somehow the people power was going to make a huge 'damage' to the nation. They saw professors were at the back of their students. When the professors had a talk with the men in power, students were ready to make the move. The media had courage to bring up the taboo issues on the news. And the common people united as they hoped a change would be a way out for them from their hunger of food.

In 'Apakabar' list, info of the bad guys and 'illegal' news sent by the insiders were blended with the high context of crisis of the nation. People allowed themselves to concern more to what happened in the country and what they would do/get to attain the common goal which was getting rid of the source of all suffers they experienced, and that source was Soeharto. With this goal in mind, the talk in 'Apakabar' list ran in a very rich context. All info was discussed and argued within the same domain. Words, sentences, and paragraphs were content with a bigger context outside the online world. Meaning then flowed without doubt. One could react to messages, either in the online battlefield by replying the message, or straight to move in the offline world by gathering people to plan things or else.

Along with the high context spread on the discussions, 'Apakabar' experienced the feeling of urgency for the discussion occurred in the digital space where absolute speed flashed via the electromagnetic vibes. The deluge of data and information transported and processed within millisecond. When this ran well together with the very high context happened in the discussions, participants of 'Apakabar' thus reacted with an urgency to plan and move ahead attaining the common goal. Other mainstream media (TV, radio, print) followed to reach a wider community. And the underground media (flyers, copies of online-news print out, and else) helped a lot.

CONCLUSION

Since its born as continuing research studies on the net, 'Apakabar' had been in a high respected domain. Its articles could be argued scientifically for the substance was a result of deep research. On its way, 'Apakabar' gained subscriber participants from respected area as well, not only because of its high-respected content but also because internet was not a common toy yet at that time.

In the rough time of political situation, 'Apakabar' did not have another choice but joined the wave of Indonesian social life deeply since its participants were mostly in the important position of many areas. 'Apakabar' thus played as a main role within the passions and the hope of Indonesian people. The nature of internet which was sending information in the absolute speed to a wide audience allowed 'Apakabar' to help its participants acting in urgency. And along with the development, 'Apakabar' was assisted with other list-serves and other media, mainstream and underground. 'Apakabar' was therefore involved in the rhyme of Indonesian politics within the silent language of the nation via the absolute speed of its nature.

Edward T. Hall had his statements many years ago when internet had not been existed yet though computers were available. However, his observation on high context and other silent language skills we needed to interact to one another were very much useful for our life in the online world today. And since the basic idea was already presented, finding a different way of applying is now the question on the top head.
