CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONSOLIDATING MIDDLE INDONESIA (1966–1986)

In the process of political emancipation – especially if this is not accompanied by armed struggle – representatives of the lower-middle-class rise in a way naturally to power.

(Kalecki 1972:162)

By the mid-1970s the New Order was well established in Jakarta. The commander of the armed forces was simultaneously the president. The first toll road was being built out of Jakarta. The chunky locally designed Toyota Kijang motorcar appeared in 1977 and quickly came to symbolize middle class prosperity, also in provincial towns like Kupang. This chapter describes first the consolidation phase in the provinces, still using the broad class-brush of previous chapters. It then reviews once more the main lines of the argument this book has been making about the process by which Middle Indonesia was made. Put baldly, the argument is that Middle Indonesia was a political project for townsfolk who were not necessarily rich and powerful on a national level, but whose disproportionate power to assert their will arose from their indispensable mediating role for the central state in the provinces, and hence from their exclusionary access to rents from the local state.

Consolidation in the first place entailed neutering collective antagonists. Most to be feared for their numbers and their unpredictability were the rural and urban poor. The previous chapter described how terror tactics reversed lower-class political mobilization. Terror had to remain an option, but permanent neutering also required longer term techniques of monitoring and social engineering. Instrumental modalities of power were at the forefront here. The ‘security approach’ introduced a new fragility into Middle Indonesia, as New Order cynicism replaced the naïve trust and optimism of the 1950s. The central government attempted to assuage the anguish by investing in rural development schemes (Henley 2012).

Dealing with those who threatened the provincial middle classes from a higher position on the social scale presented a much more delicate problem. They ranged from local aristocrats and wealthy Chinese
entrepreneurs to the generals in Jakarta and to global capital. The means here were primarily political. Provincial middle classes were mobilized on the basis of the petit bourgeois values of nationalism, indigeneity, a horror of atheism, and an aversion to what in Indonesia was called ‘free-fight capitalism.’ One of these superior antagonists had already been dealt with by 1965. The native aristocracy who had once stood above them had lost their autonomy by 1962 (although they remained socially influential) (see Chapter 7). Far far above them, there was Jakarta, the hand that fed them but that also threatened to overrule them. The administrative province of Nusa Tenggara Timur, Jakarta’s gift of the means of primitive accumulation, had been won following the anti-Javanese protests at the time of Permesta in 1957 (see Chapter 6). The one remaining locally dominant group in Kupang not yet domesticated were the rich Chinese. Their capacity for independent economic networking represented a threat to Kupang’s political class. Finally, consolidation also required strengthening internal ranks by rewarding loyalists. All these political programmes, fought intermittently but more or less consciously, were energized by limited forms of associational power – limited because they lacked the cross-class character of the vision of the 1950s; associational because they appealed to the ‘green’ conservative values that had become common among provincial middle classes by the 1960s (Alers 1956). This chapter therefore deals with external action against the poor and against the Chinese, and internal action in favour of loyalists.

The Poor

These always remained the most numerous of antagonists. Months after the killings had stopped, but with the horror still fresh in people’s minds, a new fear arose in military minds. They now worried that the horror might turn into cross-class sympathy for the victims and then into an anti-government reaction. The special security command Kopkamtib established propaganda teams to travel around Kupang and out into the districts. Their mission was to ‘coach’ people on the correct way to view the killings. In Timor the teams were led by Captain J.W. Manafe, intelligence chief for the regional military command (Kasi I Rem 161), and also a Parkindo activist. South Central Timor district had seen the strongest BTI presence and now became a special focus for propaganda (Tari 1972:3, 305). The teams were known as Team Kempen Pembantu Pelaksana Kopkamtitbda. Military reports reveal they were still at work in late 1968