

During Suharto's coup in 1965-66

US officials provided Indonesian military with death lists

The Editorial Board
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It is critical that students and workers engaged in the struggle against the Suharto dictatorship not fall prey to any illusions in the so-called democratic role of the US government. The statements by President Clinton and the State Department urging restraint on the part of the Indonesian military must be placed in the context of the actual historical role of American imperialism in the massacre of hundreds of thousands of workers and peasants that accompanied the 1965-66 military coup which brought Suharto to power and the more than three decades of US support for his dictatorship.

In 1990 retired US diplomats and CIA officers, including former Ambassador to Indonesia Marshall Green, admitted helping the Indonesian military organize its mass killing. According to a report by States News Service, published in the *Washington Post* May 21, 1990, State Department and CIA officials at the US Embassy in Jakarta personally provided the names of thousands of local, regional and national leaders of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) to the armed forces, which then killed or detained most of those named.

A former political officer in the US Embassy in Jakarta, Robert Martens, was quoted as saying, "They probably killed a lot of people and I probably have a lot of blood on my hands, but that's not all bad. There's a time when you have to strike hard at a decisive moment."

Martens said he supplied the names to an aide to Adam Malik, the Indonesian foreign minister who played a prominent role in the planning of the military coup. The aide, Tirta Kentjana Adhyatman, who was interviewed in Jakarta, confirmed that he received lists of thousands of names from Martens and passed them

on to Malik, who gave them in turn to Suharto's headquarters.

The lists provided a detailed read-out of the PKI leadership structure, including the names of provincial, city and other local PKI committee members, as well as the leaders of the PKI-controlled trade unions, women's and youth groups.

At the time, former US Ambassador to Indonesia Marshall Green confirmed the report, saying, "I know we had a lot more information [about the PKI] than the Indonesians themselves." "The US-supplied information was superior to anything they had," he said.

After the lists were turned over, US Embassy officials and CIA desk officers in Langley, Virginia carefully followed the progress of the extermination campaign by the Indonesian military. Former deputy CIA station chief Joseph Lazarsky said, "We were getting a good account in Jakarta of who was being picked up. The army had a 'shooting list' of about 4,000 or 5,000 people."

As the leaders of the PKI--then the third largest Communist Party in the world, after China and the Soviet Union--were rounded up or assassinated, US officials checked off the names against their own copies of the list. Lazarsky recalled that by the end of January 1966 there were so many checked-off names that CIA headquarters concluded that the PKI leadership had been destroyed.

The initiative in drawing up the lists of PKI members came from William Colby, who would later become the director of the CIA. In 1962 he was appointed chief of the agency's Far East division. In an interview around the time of the *Washington Post* article, Colby said in

the early 1960s he had discovered that the CIA did not have comprehensive lists of PKI leaders. This, he said, "could have been criticized as a gap in the intelligence system."

The lists were prepared for "operational planning," he said, and without them, "you're fighting blind." Colby compared the intelligence-gathering on the PKI to the notorious Phoenix Program which he directed in Vietnam, in which 20,000 cadres and sympathizers of the National Liberation Front were targeted for assassination.

The "stabilization" of Indonesia in 1965 was regarded as vital by the administration of Democratic President Lyndon Johnson, which was then engaged in sharply escalating its military intervention in Vietnam. 1965 was the year of the influx of hundreds of thousands of US troops and the beginning of saturation bombing of the liberated northern part of the country.

The former State Department and CIA officials interviewed by States News Service in 1990 freely admitted that the purpose of the lists of PKI leaders was to organize mass killings. "No one cared, so long as they were communists, that they were being butchered," said Howard Federspiel, who was an Indonesian expert working at the State Department when Suharto orchestrated the anticommunist pogrom. "No one was getting very worked up about it."

Millions were killed outright or imprisoned in concentration camps where they died of torture, neglect and slave-labor. Even an internal CIA report, leaked to the press in 1968, said that the Indonesian security forces killed 250,000 people in "one of the greatest massacres of the twentieth century."

To this day, thousands of suspected PKI supporters remain in concentration camps in Indonesia and several dozen have been shot by firing squads since the early 1980s. Around the time of the *Washington Post* article, four prisoners, Johannes Suro Hadiwiyono, Safar Suryanto, Simon Petrus Sulaeman and Norbertus Rohayan, were executed, nearly 25 years after the coup. The continued repression was a clear sign that the Suharto regime feared the resurgence of the many-millioned Indonesian proletariat and poor peasantry which is taking place today.

At the time, former Ambassador Green was quoted as saying that he and two subordinates approved giving the CIA lists to the military. Green was later appointed

US ambassador to Australia where he played a leading role in the preparations for the dismissal of the Whitlam Labor government in 1975, in the so-called Canberra Coup.



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