

Former US Ambassador Marshall Green dead at 82

A key participant in Indonesian massacre

Mike Head
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A former US Ambassador to Indonesia and Australia, Marshall Green, one of the key participants in the 1965-66 military coup which brought General Suharto to power, died of a heart attack in Washington on June 6. He was 82.

The *New York Times* published a respectful obituary, describing Green as the personification of American foreign policy in Asia from the 1950s to the 1970s. Likewise, The *Australian* presented a tribute, penned by John Wheeldon, a minister in the 1972-75 Australian Labor Party government of Gough Whitlam, in whose downfall Green was also involved.

Green, a long-time operative of the US State Department, played a direct and personal role in preparing and overseeing the massacre of up to one million workers and peasants in the period of the Indonesian coup. Under his command, State Department and CIA officials at the US Embassy in Jakarta provided the Indonesian armed forces with "shooting lists" bearing the names of thousands of local, regional and national leaders of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI).

In 1990 Green and other retired US diplomats and CIA officers admitted helping the military organise the mass killing. Green confirmed a report by States News Service, published in the *Washington Post* on May 21, 1990, 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."

One of Green's former staff, Robert Martens, who served as a political officer in the Jakarta Embassy, 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."

Green arrived in Jakarta in 1965, just before the coup. This bloody overthrow was the product of years of intensive preparations by the CIA and the US military. The American forces trained and equipped the Indonesian military and then staged a provocation--a supposed coup by middle-ranking officers--to justify the ouster of Indonesian President Sukarno and the extermination of the PKI.

In early 1965 Sukarno had brought leaders of the PKI--then the third largest Communist Party in the world, after China and the Soviet Union--into his government, alongside a number of generals. But the pro-Chinese Stalinist PKI had failed to adequately suppress mounting unrest, including the seizure of plantations and factories by impoverished workers and peasants.

This situation threatened the interests of US oil and rubber companies, as well as the plans of Democratic Party President Lyndon Johnson, then engaged in sharply escalating the US military intervention in Vietnam. The Johnson White House selected Green to oversee the Indonesian bloodbath on the basis of proven experience. During Green's earlier term as charge d'affaires in Seoul, General Park Chung Hee had carried out a military coup, initiating nearly three decades of US-backed military dictatorship.

Green's long career centred on Asia and the Pacific, apart from five years in the US Embassy in Stockholm (1950-55). He was posted to South Korea twice, Japan twice, Hong Kong and New Zealand, as well as Indonesia and Australia. He rose to the upper echelons of the State Department, serving for two years as assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. He advised Henry Kissinger when Kissinger was secretary of state, and travelled with president Nixon to meet Mao Zedong in 1972.

Green was an unusually high-level and very controversial appointment when posted to Australia just after the election of the Whitlam government in 1972, the first Labor Party government in 23 years. There can be little doubt that during his time in Canberra, the White House, Pentagon and CIA had a hand in the destabilisation of the Whitlam government prior to its dismissal by the Governor-General in November 1975. During Green's tenure, for example, businessmen with various intelligence connections embroiled the government in a scandal involving overseas loans, and Washington cast doubt over continuing collaboration in the US spy satellite base at Pine Gap.

In his obituary of Green, Wheeldon defends the former ambassador and the US against allegations that they helped bring down Whitlam's government. As if to underscore the Labor Party's loyalty to the US alliance and the capitalist order as a whole, Wheeldon writes of Green: "It did not take him long to recognise that, although we could be annoying, we were really rather harmless."

Wheeldon's highly favourable account of Green's career, and the praise offered by the *New York Times* are warnings that, far from the massacres and interventions associated with Green belonging to a by-gone era, new atrocities against the international working class are being prepared.



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