

Vincent Bevins. *The Jakarta Method: Washington's Anticommunist Crusade and the Mass Murder Program that Shaped Our World*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2020. Pp. 340 Paper \$18.99.

Journalist Vincent Bevins exposes the history of murder campaigns endorsed by the CIA throughout the Cold War. Bevins has covered both Southeast Asia and Brazil in his career with the *Washington Post* and *Los Angeles Times*. He focuses on the events in Indonesia in 1965-66, which can be considered an ideological genocide, where nearly one million were killed and another million were placed into concentration camps. The international community has been reticent to acknowledge this as a genocide due to its targeting of communists and alleged communists, rather than across ethnic lines. Bevins presents a global history through the lens of how the methods employed in Jakarta by right-wing military groups became a model employed throughout the Third World as a means to prevent the spread of communism. Bevins, focuses on interviews and oral histories of those that were there and experienced these murder campaigns first hand, however there is also a fair amount of archival research especially focused on de-classified documents from Washington itself.

Bevins posits that the general understanding of the nature of the Cold War has been misrepresented, especially to Americans. The US and the First World exerted their influence over the Third World to a far greater extent than the Soviet Union. Much has been said about the Red Scare and McCarthyism on the US domestic policy front, yet the fear mongering was a global campaign. From the US perspective that fear was not the “evils” of Communism but the fear of Communism being able to succeed. US interventionist policy took the stance of murdering Communist movements in their cradle, and Indonesia was where that playbook was written. General Suharto, a right-wing anti-communist led a coup d’etat that deposed a democratically elected, notably non-communist president who was tolerant of the Indonesian communist party then the fourth largest in the world. Suharto operated of his own accord, however American Intelligence provided his army with lists of suspected communists and union leaders who had given American business interests difficulty.

“Jakarta” became a sort of code word for these US endorsed murder programs, a chilling passage recounted “Jakarta is coming” graffitied on the streets of Santiago, Chile after the election of Salvador Allende prior to the coup on September 11, 1973. These murder programs occurred across the Third World and served to protect US interests on a global scale, and show just how bloody the Cold War actually was, Bevins work chooses to highlight how the US was complicit in the deaths of millions around the globe. When asked how the US won the Cold War one leftist interviewed by Bevins replied simply, “You killed us.”

*The Jakarta Method* draws from a variety of other secondary material, notably and acknowledged by Bevins, Odd Arne Westad’s *The Global Cold War*. Which has a similar thesis but focuses more on the superpowers involved, as opposed to first-hand accounts and oral histories. Westad provides a more classical historian’s version of events, where Bevins’ writing has more popular appeal due to his training as a journalist. It also is necessary to mention *The Act of Killing* (2012) a chilling documentary that follows those who carried out the genocide in Indonesia, which is framed by the author as a sort of introduction or companion film to *The Jakarta Method*.

*The Jakarta Method* provides an accessible and well written account of areas of twentieth century global politics that have often been hidden, forgotten, or silenced. Bevins presents an intriguing and sharply written account that situates itself as a popular history divorced from the connotations that academics tend to paint such histories with. Recommended reading for all Americans who are willing to turn a critical eye inward.

*Jarad Ryan*