

Islam, a Forgotten Holocaust, and American Historical Amnesia

イスラム教、忘れ去られたホロコースト、そして歴史に対するアメリカの記憶喪失症

Peter Dale Scott



In a September 2014 address to the nation, President Obama attacked ISIL (or ISIS) as “terrorists... unique in their brutality. They execute captured prisoners. They kill children.”¹ But of course such terrorism in the last half-century is hardly “unique.” Nor is it unprecedented. Still less is it confined to America’s foes. In fact the first major Muslim extermination campaign against civilians killed without trial for their “Westernness,” occurred a half century ago, on a far, far vaster scale, and with active American support and encouragement.

If you did not know this, consider these four questions:

- 1) What has been the largest planned civilian massacre since the Nazi Holocaust?
- 2) What was the largest massacre ever effectively ignored by the U.S. governing media until after it had been completed?

3) What major CIA operation is almost never treated in the many histories that have now been published about the CIA?

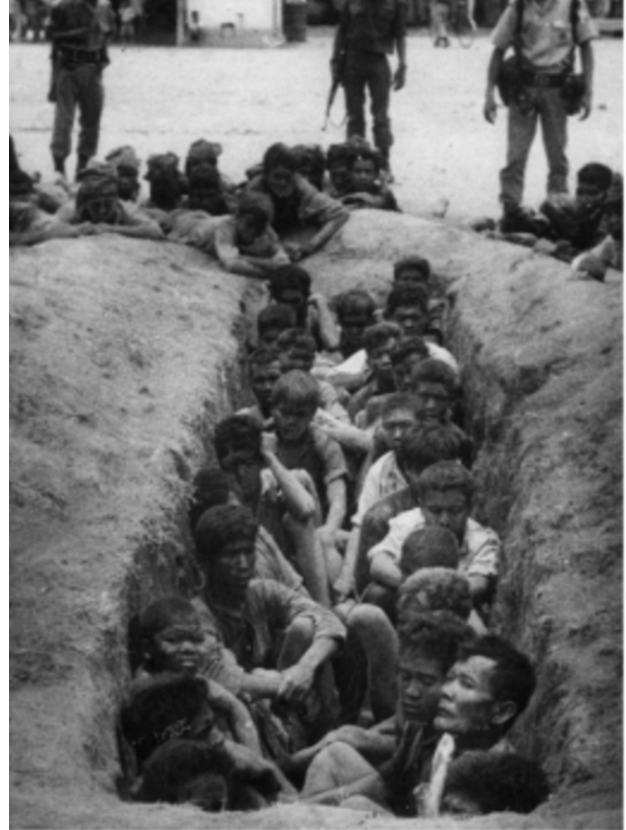
4) What massacre was part of a process later celebrated by *Time* Magazine as “the West’s best news in Asia”?

The answer to all four questions, I believe, is the same: CIA and Pentagon encouragement of a rebellious cadre of anti-Communist generals who in 1965 resolved the question of Indonesia’s uncertain future by a ruse to overthrow its elected president Sukarno and kill off the members and suspected sympathizers of the nation’s largest political party. This was the Indonesian Communist Party or PKI, which was also the largest Communist party in the world outside of the Sino-Soviet bloc. The total number of those killed will remain forever unknown, but was once estimated by Amnesty International to be “many more than one million.”²





Although the Indonesian Army presided over the massacre, it mobilized a major Muslim youth group, Ansor, to carry out many of the actual murders.³ A large number of people besides Communists and their families were summarily killed; one group in particular consisted of rural educators. The massacre has been commemorated, appropriately, as “The Forgotten Holocaust of Indonesia.”⁴



In recent years some British scholars and journalists have acknowledged candidly “that the British and American governments did not just cover up the massacre: they had a direct hand in bringing it about.”⁵ But it is still almost impossible to discuss this involvement in America itself. Wikipedia does mention the CIA, but primarily to state that “the CIA described the massacre as ‘one of the worst **mass murders** of the 20th century, along with the Soviet purges of the 1930s, the Nazi mass murders during the Second World War, and the Maoist bloodbath of the early 1950s.’” Essays I wrote on the topic were published in Canada, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and four times in Indonesia – but never in the United States.⁶

Since 1980 there have been occasional references in America to *post-coup* U.S. assistance to the new Suharto military junta after the massacre. Tim Weiner, for example, writes in his CIA history of “\$500,000 of medical supplies...with the understanding that

the army would sell the goods for cash.⁷

But there was active U.S. encouragement and support for the massacre itself. As I have described elsewhere, government-connected American academics, like Guy Pauker and William Kintner, urged their contacts in the Indonesian army, both directly and in print, to "to strike, sweep their house clean," while "liquidating the enemy's political and guerrilla armies."⁸



**Public burning of hammer and sickle.
PKI headquarters burned, 8 October 1965.**

The support was not merely rhetorical. In July 1965, two months before the coup, and at a time when Congress thought it had terminated U.S. aid to Indonesia, Rockwell-Standard secured a contractual agreement to deliver two hundred light aircraft to the Indonesian Army in the next two months.⁹

According to Bradley Simpson, the United States government also provided the Indonesian Armed Forces with covert monetary assistance, small arms from Thailand, and communications equipment.¹⁰



**Presidents Johnson and Sukarno, Washington DC,
January 1965.**

One year earlier, a memo to President Lyndon Johnson from Secretary of State Dean Rusk, on July 17, 1964, made clear the importance of U.S. military aid to anti-Communist elements in the Indonesian Army: "Our aid to Indonesia ... we are satisfied ... *isnot helping Indonesia militarily. It is however,permitting us to maintain some contact with key elements in Indonesiawhich areinterested in and capable of resisting Communist takeover.* We think this is of vital importance to the entire Free World."¹¹

Finally there is the admitted but still disputed fact, first reported by journalist Kathy Kadane in May 1990, that in the course of the massacre, personnel in the U.S. Embassy passed up to 5000 names of alleged PKI cadres to the Indonesian Army. Though an Embassy officer, Robert Martens, acknowledged to the *New York Times* "that he had passed the list of names," the *Times* nonetheless chose to run a

belated and “balanced” story in which U.S. Ambassador Green dismissed the claim of Embassy involvement as “garbage”.¹²

The following table of Wikipedia hits (under the categories of killings, massacre and genocide) will illustrate how much more awareness there is in our society of holocausts committed by our enemies, such as Pol Pot in Cambodia, than by those such as Suharto associated with ourselves.

(in thousands)	KILLINGS	MASSACRE	GENOCIDE
POL POT	486	160	383
SUHARTO	170	108	77.5

This cultural bias becomes encoded in our own brains, and more importantly in the brains of those who govern us and the world. Our leaders assume, like the British before them, that American actions are “clearly directed to others’ benefit.... Where others push their national interest, the U.S. tries to advance universal principles.”¹³



Skulls from the massacre with a relative of one of the victims.

Some who dissent report the facts about the U.S. role in 1965 to make the case that America

is just as bad as, if not much worse than, any other great power. That is not my purpose. In my most recent political book, *The American Deep State*, I wrote that “I believe in American exceptionalism, and that at one time America was truly exceptional in its unprecedented replacement of authoritarian with limited constitutional government.”

But American government today has become manic in its hubristic confidence that its interventions worldwide are always benign¹⁴ In that book I attempt to explain the origins of this mania rationally. In this essay I suggest that one place to begin by acknowledging America’s involvement in the holocaust of 1965.

Peter Dale Scott is a former Canadian diplomat and English Professor at the University of California, Berkeley. His latest book is [The American Deep State: Wall Street, Big Oil, and the Attack on U.S. Democracy](#), published by Rowman & Littlefield. He is also the author of [Drugs Oil and War](#), [The Road to 9/11](#), [The War Conspiracy: JFK, 9/11, and the Deep Politics of War](#), and [American War Machine: Deep Politics, the CIA Global Drug Connection and the Road to Afghanistan](#). His website, which contains a wealth of his writings, is [here](#).

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Notes

¹ "President Obama: 'We Will Degrade and Ultimately Destroy ISIL,'" The White House Blog, September 10, 2014.

² Noam Chomsky and Edward S Herman, *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism* (Boston: South End Press, 1979), 208. Contemporary estimates are discussed by Robert Cribb, and compacted into an assessment of "as low as 200,000 or as high as one million" (Robert Cribb, "Unresolved Problems in the Indonesian Killings of 1965-1966," *Asian Survey*, July/August 2002, 559). [Wikipedia](#) suggests that the present consensus estimate of deaths is 500,000.

³ For details, see Nathaniel Mehr, *Constructive Bloodbath in Indonesia: The United States, Great Britain and the Mass Killings of 1965-1966* (Nottingham, England: Spokesman Press, 2009), 49-53, 100.

⁴ International Institute of Social History "1965: The Forgotten Holocaust of Indonesia," commemorative event of October 2005. A better word is needed for a campaign of mass political killing, a term analogous to genocide but explicitly highlighting the political goals. No such term currently exists. I propose the term "policide" (the killing of many) but will also use the awkwardly suitable term "Holocaust" in this essay: Stalin's campaign against the kulaks can also be called a policide, but hardly a Holocaust. Estimates of the number killed in Stalin's campaign vary widely, but even so it appears that the primary effort was to deport rather than kill them.

⁵ Isabel Hilton, "Our bloody coup in Indonesia," *Guardian*, July 31, 2001. Cf. Matthew Jones, *Conflict and confrontation in South East Asia, 1961-1965: Britain, the United States, and the creation of Malaysia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Mehr, *Constructive Bloodbath in Indonesia*.

⁶ My essay, "The United States and the Overthrow of Sukarno, 1965-1967," was officially banned in Suharto's Indonesia. (Jonathon Green, *Encyclopedia of Censorship* [New York: Facts on File, 2005], 278).

⁷ Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 260.

⁸ Guy J. Pauker, "The Role of the Military in Indonesia," in John H. Johnson, ed., *The role of the military in underdeveloped countries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962), 221-23 ("strike"); William Kintner and Joseph Kornfeder, *The New Frontier of War* [London: Frederick Muller, 1963], pp. 233, 237-8 ("liquidating"). Other examples in Peter Dale Scott, "The United States and the Overthrow of Sukarno, 1965-1967," *Pacific Affairs*, 58, Summer 1985, 239-264; Peter Dale Scott, "Exporting Military-Economic Development," in Malcolm Caldwell, ed., *Ten Years' Military Terror in Indonesia* (Nottingham, England: Spokesman Books, 1975), pp. 227-32.

⁹ Church Committee Hearings, p. 941; cf. p. 955.

¹⁰ Armando Siahaan, "Historian Claims West Backed Post-Coup Mass Killings in '65," *Jakarta Globe*, January 9, 2009,

¹¹ *Declassified Documents Quarterly Catalogue*, 1982, 001786 [DOS Memo for President of July 17, 1964; italics in original].

¹² Michael Wines, "C.I.A. Tie Asserted in Indonesia Purge," *New York Times*, July 12, 1990.

¹³ Jessica T. Mathews, "The Road from Westphalia," *New York Review of Books*, March 19, 2015.

¹⁴ Peter Dale Scott, *The American Deep State: Wall Street, Big Oil, and the Attack on U.S. Democracy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 99, 139.