

REVIEWS

The Jakarta Method: Washington's Anticommunist Crusade and the Mass Murder Program that Shaped Our World. Vincent Bevins. New York: Public Affairs, 2020. 320 pages. ISBN: 9781541724006.

Looking at the Cold War through a global framework, Bevins argues that “what happened in Brazil in 1964 and Indonesia in 1965 may have been the most important victories” during the war (2). Furthermore, the two events from both countries led to the “creation of a massive international network of extermination... which played a fundamental role in building the world we all live today” (2). Showing that the violence in Brazil, Indonesia, and other countries is a “fundamental part” of the Cold War and “US goals worldwide” (5), Bevins deepens our understanding of the Cold War in general and anti-communist violence in particular. His findings, he says, are of interest to, among others, experts on the Cold War. I agree. He has uncovered much that have hitherto been little-known (7).

Bevins uses the story from the individuals inside the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) itself to explain its establishment. He not only stresses the role of the CIA during the Cold War's anti-communist crusade, which defamed its enemies by framing them for murder, terror, kidnapping, coup d'etat, and others, but also touches on the agency's fight against the Soviets in Europe. They realized that the Soviets were too entrenched in Europe, so they came to a decision to focus American power on the Third World instead. Also, Bevins puts forth a significant argument: that the “détente” (the period of easing tension between the US and Soviet Union in the 1970s) did not apply to the Third World, where violence and war continued to spread.

Bevins first narrates Brazil's history, from being a Portuguese colony to becoming a US ally in Latin America that carried out the Cold War, anti-communist propaganda, including an assault against Chilean socialists in 1973. It is not until half of the book that the reader will understand the

meaning of the book's title, "The Jakarta method." Bevins connects, in two ways, the extermination of Indonesian communists in 1965 to later global developments. First, right-wing partisans across the globe, with Washington's support, employed a similar method (extermination) to eliminate leftists. Bevins explains in detail the "Jakarta Operation" in South America from 1970 to 1976 and later in Central America in the late 1970s and 1980s. Second, leftists across the world paid attention to, and drew lessons from, the fate of the Indonesian Communist Party. The book shows the transition from the Jakarta Axiom, which refers to the threat from an independent Third World to the Jakarta Method, with Jakarta coming in the end to refer to "anti-communist mass murder." Bevins concludes that the world where we live in now has changed in five different ways, the trauma left by mass killing, the crushing of development, especially in the Third World countries, the defeat of the socialist movement, and lastly, a fanatical anti-communism that continues to exist today.

Bevins combines primary and secondary sources with oral history interviewing different people across the globe, zooming out from personal-individual stories to the global narrative of the Cold War. His book succeeds not only in initiating those unfamiliar with the subject but also in engaging with experts in Cold War Studies, Latin American Studies, Indonesian Studies, Southeast Asian Studies, or History in general. Even though the book focuses on politics, it also touches on the important role of business, such as in Guatemala in the mid-1950s when Washington sought to protect American business interests in the country by supporting three coup attempts. Bevins also discusses racial problems in the United States, Indonesia, and Brazil, and stresses the media's role during the Cold War. Examining news articles in mainstream media such as *The New York Times* and *The People's Daily*, he shows that both media largely supported the Cold War.

This book introduces the perspectives of the victims of anti-communist mass murder programs, which are crucial to get a better understanding of how the world turned out after the end of the Cold War. Towards the end of the book, Bevins quotes the most emotional statement from an interviewee.

“The United States won. Here in Indonesia, you got what you wanted, and around the world,”

“How did we win?” Bevins asked.

“You killed us” (p.233–234)

Indeed, Bevins brings a new vantage point on the Cold War, departing from standard Cold War scholarship that focuses on important figures/world leaders. What’s missing in the book are images which could have accompanied the narratives, say, those on the media propaganda in Latin America about the Jakarta Operation, the mural painting in Chile, or discussion of Seminyak, Bali, a site of mass murder. Though solidly reliant on oral history, I expected more secondary sources quoted to enrich the whole story. Readers might notice that the author quoted one book or author several times, e.g. Bradley Simpson’s *Economists with Guns*, Tim Weiner’s *Legacy of Ashes*, or Evan Thomas’s *The Very Best Men*. By giving voice to the victims, Bevins writes in opposition to a “history written by the victors,” and seeks to correct a long-standing imbalance in historiography on the Cold War.

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