

Fascist Dictatorships and the Unspoken Atrocities of US Imperialism: Chile and Indonesia

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For the vast majority of Americans, heavily insulated from the truth about world realities, September 11 means only one thing: the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York, the Pentagon and the commandeering of planes by supposedly Arab extremists outside our control. The tragedy collected a little under 3,000 lives and scarred the consciousness of the nation, inaugurating a period of constant fear mongering by the American establishment that has resulted in a serious erosion of American constitutional liberties.

For the rest of the world September 11 has an additional, older and even more dramatic connotation: the 1973 US-sponsored military coup against Chile's legally elected socialist president, Dr. Salvador Allende, at the hands of Gen. Augusto Pinochet, by now a well-known figure in the sordid stable of CIA-henchmen. Below, reflexions by the author on these two anti-democracy, American-engineered coups d'etat which, despite their brutality and cynicism, produced dramatically different outcomes.—Eds

Photoreportage by Andre Vltchek

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Magnificent Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Santiago (Vltchek)

What happens to a poor country that is hit by a brutal military coup, then thrown to religious

zealots, and forced to live under the heel of extreme capitalism and fascism?

Several years ago, I spoke to two members of Allende's government. Two who managed to survive. One of them recalled: "They used to threaten us, before the coup, before that terrible September 11, 1973: 'Watch out, comrades, Jakarta is coming!'"

"We did not know much about Jakarta then," he confessed. "Only that it was the capital of a far-away country called Indonesia... But very soon we found out..."

'Jakarta' is not just the capital of the fourth most populous country on earth; it is also the 'least habitable major city in Asia Pacific'. Jakarta is also a concept, an enormous experiment on human beings, which was quickly turned into a blueprint that has later been implemented by the West all over the developing world.

The experiment was about trying to figure this out: What happens to a poor country that is hit by a brutal military coup, then thrown to religious zealots, and forced to live under the heel of extreme capitalism and fascism? And what happens if almost its entire culture gets destroyed, and instead of education, some brainwashing mechanism perfected abroad, gets implemented?

What if you kill 2-3 million people, and then you ban entire languages and cultures, theatres, art films, atheism, everything that is to the left of center?

And what if you use thugs, paramilitaries, archaic family and religious structures and a ridiculously toothless media, to maintain 'the new order'?

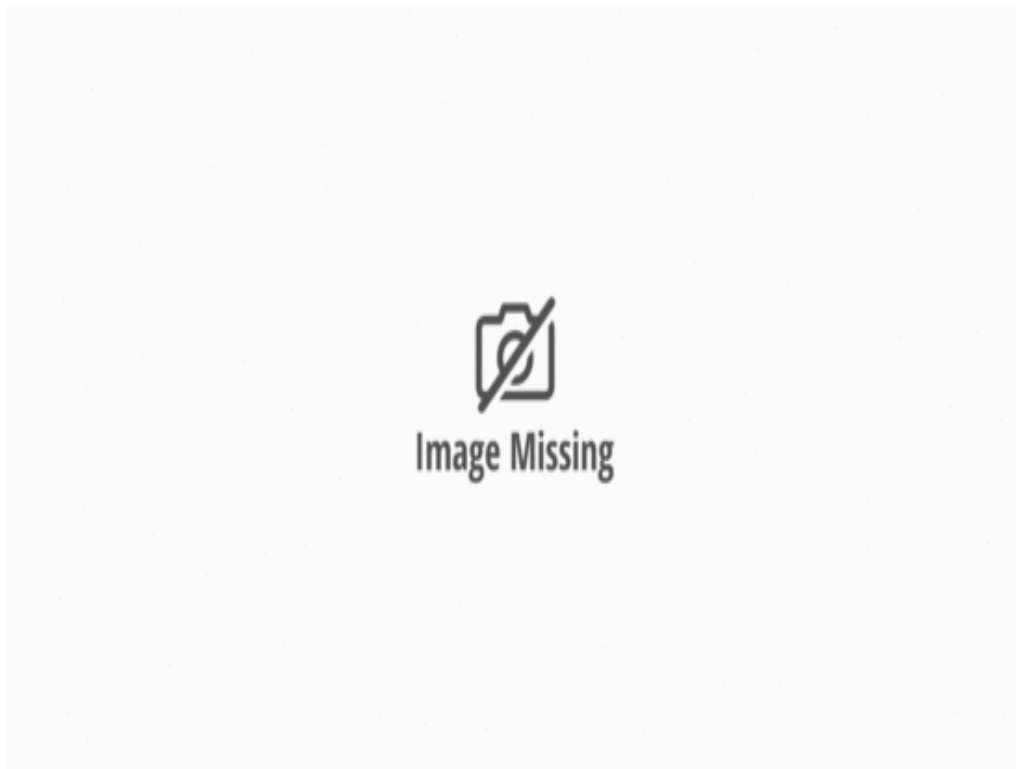
The answer is this: You get your Indonesian model! Which means - almost no production, a ruined environment, collapsed infrastructure, endemic corruption, not even one sound intellectual of international caliber, and frankly speaking, a 'functionally illiterate' population, ignorant about the world, about its own history, and about its own position in the world.



But the most important conclusion of this 'research' is that after the orgy of terror in 1965 and 1966, after the millions that were killed, millions that were raped, tens of millions beaten and tortured, the result is an entire archipelago that is wholly silenced and unable to organize any resistance. You get an archipelago that is unable to think, and which constantly repeats religious, pop and television slogans, instead of thinking about the past, the present and the future.

If you are a corrupt and treasonous local ruler, or if you are the puppeteer that controls such a country from abroad, what you get is easy access to all its natural resources, a population unable to organize itself and fight for its rights, and voters indifferent to reality and unfamiliar with concepts such as dignity, and therefore ready to cast their ballot simply for a fee.

You get all this and more, and all you have to do is to make sure you butcher some 2-3% of the population, 40% of teachers, and that you rape millions of women and children, then terrify and silence all the minorities.



Indonesian fascist art. (Vltchek)

The West hailed this as a splendid success! It congratulated "Our Man - Suharto" (In 1995, a senior Clinton administration official, commenting on the Indonesian President, Suharto, then on a state visit to Washington, referred to him as "our kind of guy."). Murdering millions of 'Communists', was after all, the best way of gaining the admiration and respect of the US White House and Congress. And "selling" the country to Western companies was the most honorable and sensible path to gaining political and financial rewards from the 'free world'.

To terrify the country, to paralyze it by fear... To strip it of all real opposition, that was exactly what was needed! Suharto and his military cronies, his generals (one of them is presently the President of Indonesia), his thugs that murdered intellectuals, teachers,

writers and union leaders, all became our 'buddies', our 'mates', our 'jolly good fellows'.



Indonesian modern art – that will really save the country (Vltchek)

Like those guys, who dutifully cut people to pieces, raped 14-year old girls and terrorized those people who were still willing to think and to speak, everything was shown in detail in the award winning film by Joshua Oppenheimer: "The Act of Killing".

And what did the Indonesian viewers and TV hosts do when the thugs confessed to kill hundreds? They laughed, and cheered, and applauded!

In 1998, Suharto fell, but the 'model' survived, and it is still being promoted, and pushed down the throats of many countries all over the world. It is marketed as 'tolerant and democratic' by European and US government officials and certain NGO's. This I was told, recently, by members of the diplomatic community in Cairo, Egypt, the place where the revolution was successfully derailed and destroyed, mainly from abroad.

And why should it not be promoted? This is the masterpiece of Western domination: an enormous country, fully screwed and thoroughly ruined, plundered, abandoned to the market, robbed of everything... And the people here are so conditioned, so badly educated, so uninformed, that they are thoroughly unaware of how grotesque the state of their subsistence is.

In Indonesia, for years and decades, I have been interviewing hundreds of poor men and women who are living in a gutter, then shitting into filthy canals in cities like Surabaya, Medan and Jakarta, using the same water to wash their dishes and themselves... People who barely survive on a less than \$1 a day, were proudly declaring on camera that they are not poor, that they are doing well, and that their country is just fine.



The brainwashed exist everywhere. Indonesians praying in front of Suharto tomb. Indoctrinated ignorance is a form of functional social imbecility. It also exists in Orwellian “democracies” in the advanced West. (Vltchek)

A few streets away, the newly rich, sit in their luxury SUVs in epic traffic jams, watching television, going nowhere, but proud that they have moved up the rungs on their class ladder.

What a success! What an absolute success of fascist, neo-colonial demagoguery and the ‘market economy’!

This ‘success’ was, of course, studied and analyzed in Washington, Canberra, London and elsewhere. It has been implemented all over the world, in different forms and variations, but with the same essence: strike and murder every thinking being, shock and brainwash... then rob the poor and reward a few criminals... from Chile to Argentina, Central America, Yeltsin’s Russia and Rwanda, now again in Egypt.

It has worked almost everywhere. “Jakarta was coming”, and it has been spreading its filth, its ignorance, brutality and compassionless way of ‘thinking’ all over the planet!



The Santiago Metro – As in the Paris metro, a huge public art gallery. (Vltchek)

It seemed to be the most perfect ‘treatment’ for dissent and the dreams of freedom, all over the world. And the US has been busy administering it all over the Western hemisphere, but also in Asia, Africa, and everywhere. Death squads were trained in the North American military facilities, and then sent back to operate in Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic and in many other unfortunate places.

Of course they could not fully compete with the insane sadism of the Indonesian butchers, but they did their best; they worked quite well, really... Blowing the brains out of rebellious priests during their sermons, raping teenage daughters in front of their parents, cutting people to pieces... slightly watered-down versions of the Jakarta scenario, but with some local ‘cultural’ flavors.

In Chile, in one of the oldest democracies on earth, the 9-11-1973 military takeover, brought new innovations to the established routine of horrors: women prisoners raped by dogs, prisoners with their hands tied, thrown alive into the sea from helicopters (their bellies ripped open), while some were delivered to those old German Nazis inhabiting the so called “Colonia Dignidad” in the south of the country, for medical experiments.

It appeared that Western terror; its colonial tactics perfected and refined over centuries, would finally triumph, globally. It looked almost certain that no antidote would work: An antidote to the sadism and fear that has been paralyzing most of the subjects in the client states.

The Chilean military junta began with the same zeal as its Indonesian counterpart of eight years earlier. In Jakarta, religious Muslim cadres almost immediately joined the killing and torture, while in Santiago; it was conservative Christendom, particularly Opus Dei, which threw its support behind the murderers and rapists of General Pinochet. In both places ‘conservative family values’ were evoked to justify the most appalling atrocities.

The streets of Santiago and other Chilean cities fell silent. Horror was omnipresent. Doors were kicked open by military boots and people dragged to dungeons, tortured, raped, murdered.

The National Stadium was filled with men and women. Like in Jakarta, noble, educated people were tortured and beaten, even killed with absolutely no scruples.

At one point, the soldiers came and arrested a bard; one of the most beloved singers of Latin America, Victor Jara. They broke his hands. Then they threw his guitar at him and shouted: "Now you can sing!"



Student protest – demanding free education all the way to university level. (Vltchek)

This was the most significant moment – I would insist, the crucial moment. The moment when Santiago and Jakarta parted! The moment when in South America, an extremely long and difficult process began: the process, which could be described as the fight for freedom, for true freedom, not for that empty fake slogan that has been repeated over and over again by Western propaganda.

Because at that moment, Victor Jara stood up, in terrible pain but undefeated, full of spite, and sang to his tormentors, straight at their filthy muzzles, "Venceremos!" He sang loud, and after a while, they were overwhelmed by his voice and the lyrics, they aimed at him and shot him dead.

But he did not die, instead he became the symbol of resistance, of the struggle against fascism and imperialism. He became the symbol of the struggle that is still continuing and gaining momentum in so many parts of the world!

In 1965, in Jakarta, there was no struggle. The victims allowed themselves to be slaughtered. They were begging for mercy as they were strangled, stabbed, shot to death. They called their tormentors, their murderers, their rapists, 'pak' and 'mas' (respectful form of addressing a man). They cried and begged for mercy.

In 1973, in Santiago de Chile, young men and women went to the mountains, or hid in urban areas, to fight fascism, under the banner of MIR; some 10,000 of them. It was a clean and proud fight, if a very uneven fight given the enormous forces arrayed against them, as MIR decisively rejected all forms of terrorism, and concentrated on military targets.

Hundreds of thousands of Chilean people left the country, scattering to all corners of the globe, from Mexico to Sweden, Canada to New Zealand. Wherever they went, they relentlessly worked on bringing down Pinochet and his US-backed junta. They wrote theatre and radio plays, made powerful films, wrote novels, arranged meetings and demonstrations in literally every major capital of the world. They never gave up. They dedicated their lives to the struggle. The millions at home and the hundreds of thousands of those forced to live abroad.

Eventually, Augusto Pinochet became a symbol of degenerate military power, of treason, of colonialism, of modern fascism.

In Indonesia, the victims accepted their 'fate' and with it, they accepted the most disgusting type of market fundamentalism. They accepted the fascist political system that stripped the poor (really the great majority) of all their rights. They accepted the thuggish, mafia-style arrangement for their country. They accepted a system where women are treated as the property of their fathers and later as the property of their husbands, while those who work and hold important positions are treated like whores, by their bosses, co-workers and even by their fellow Parliamentarians.

In Chile, nothing was really 'accepted'. Nothing was forgotten and nothing was forgiven. Instead of looking at the ruling 'elites' as heroes, the majority of Chileans saw them as a bunch of bandits. Instead of looking at their parents with servile submissiveness 'Indonesian-style', a great number of Chilean youth held them responsible for creating or at least tolerating this monstrous system.

While Indonesia became the second (after Nigeria) most religious country on Earth (despite the fact that Muslim and Hindu cadres were directly responsible for some of the most appalling atrocities, while Christians are lately professing the outrageous belief that God loves the rich, and hates the poor, participating in the segregation of society, and even in open racism), Chile reformed its laws, modernized its education, and sent Christianity where it belongs – to its churches and very far away from public eyes.

In Indonesia, Suharto stepped down, but the system survived; it even hardened itself. One of Suharto's generals is now serving as President of the country. And decades ago he was one of the leading military figures in occupied East Timor, during the most horrible massacres, during the genocide, in which some 30% of the local population lost their lives. The father of his wife was another general, who boasted that during the 1965 coup, they, the military, managed to kill around 3 million people.

In Chile, as in Argentina, most of those military leaders who committed crimes against humanity are now imprisoned, disgraced and despised.

Both armies, Indonesian and Chilean, of course, committed high treason, by selling their services to foreign powers, and instead of defending their citizens, fought for a fee, against their own defenseless women and children.

In Indonesia, many consider one of the worst butchers of the 20th century, and the most corrupt ruler of all times, General Suharto, a national hero! In Chile, General Augusto Pinochet is now clearly identified as a criminal, by a great majority of the people.

In Indonesia, between 2 and 3 million died in 1965/66. In Chile, the number was 3 to 4

thousand. Even adjusted to the dissimilar size of the population, the difference is overwhelming. Still, in Chile, there are hundreds of books written on the topic, dozens of powerful films made, and the topic is constantly addressed in newspapers, magazines and television programs – it is an essential part of the national memory. Without it, there seems to be a consensus – there is no way forward.

In Indonesia, there is an absolute blackout and silence.

The Indonesian population is fully loyal to the propaganda it has been fed for many decades. It is telling that at a recent attempt to resurrect the topic, at a screening of the documentary (unfortunately quite mediocre) called “15 Years After” (referring to numbers of years since Suharto’s stepped down), there were only 5 people in one of the major cinemas in Jakarta... And it was a Saturday afternoon.



Bandung – City of Learning. (Vltchek)

Saturday afternoon in Santiago de Chile and the entire city is getting ready for an extremely long night. Dozens of theatres offer everything from classical performances to avant-garde plays. Nightclubs are preparing for the latest bands that come from all over Latin America. The music ranges from opera and symphonies, to ballads, salsa and cumbia. Cinemas in all corners of the city are showing the latest releases, as well as Asian, Latin American and European art films.

There is some ‘art for art’, but plenty of it is deeply political; it is shaping the nation, addressing every important issue, including the past.

The same obsession with culture and knowledge is the norm in other cities of the ‘Southern Cone’, including Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo and Montevideo. To know is to exist. To understand the world is to be free, independent, and to be alive. Knowledge is valued; it is deeply respected.

Some 15 thousand kilometers West of Chile, in the Indonesian cities of Jakarta, Surabaya or Medan, there is close to nothing one can do on Saturday nights. There are restaurants, of

course, and several cinemas showing the lowest grade of Hollywood films. But there are no art cinemas, no theatres (only maybe one theatre performance a month, in a city like Jakarta, with 12 million inhabitants). The only random concerts are those organized by the European cultural centers, and those very few ones for the 'elites' in some hard to get into private hall.

Life is extremely boring in Indonesia, with no variety and no intellectual inspiration. And that's how it was intended.

To get to the theaters, many citizens of Santiago opt for the metro system, one of the best and most efficient on earth. Each station is dedicated to local artists, many are equipped with public libraries, and one even has a free art cinema, where one can sit for the entire day for the price of one metro token, watching the greatest world classics.

In Jakarta, there is no metro at all, and almost no sidewalks, and there are only very few public parks. To cross the street, one often has to take a taxi. The city is approaching, and some people say it has already reached, a permanent gridlock.

Chile is embracing knowledge and everything that is 'public'. Indonesia is stuck in uncool, totally cheap pop, buried in depressing individualism, forced to admire all in 'private'.

The countries of South America that suffered from brutal dictatorships imposed by the West are now free and run by Socialist governments.

Indonesia is run by thugs, old generals and by a gloomy, degenerate, capitalist clique.

Women govern Brazil, Argentina and Chile, while a man who was in charge of a military unit in East Timor, during the genocide, runs Indonesia.

Michelle Bachelet who won the second round and returned as the President of Chile (after being a head of UNIFEM) is a doctor, pediatrician, single mother of 3 and an atheist. Her father, an army general during Allende's administration, was murdered by Pinochet's regime, and Ms Bachelet herself was brutally tortured in detention. She left the country and was trained as a doctor in East Germany, before returning back home.

While Camila Vallejo (25 years old), and her fellow student leaders are ready to become MP's in Chile (Camila was indeed elected), many for the Communist Party. Indonesian women MP's face sexual harassment from their fellow People's Representatives, right on the floor of Parliament. And the Communist Party is flatly banned in Indonesia, just to make sure that nobody pushes for land reforms and social justice, anymore.

Chileans are now fighting for free education and for free medical care, and it is expected that their demands will be satisfied during the Presidency of Ms. Bachelet.

Indonesia is living with fully collapsed medical care and education systems, and everyone who can afford it, is leaving for hospitals in Singapore or Malaysia, and as far as possible for education.

There are countless private schools all over Indonesia, most of them religious. They specialize, it appears, in producing masses of young people unable to excel in anything at all, except in serving capitalist and religious dogmas, and in stealing for the sake of their family clans.

While Chile is fighting against poverty on all fronts, including by building high quality social housing, Indonesia has some of the most appalling inequalities on earth, and it even lies about the number of its inhabitants (it has over 300 million citizens, but only around 247 million are accounted for), just in case someone may demand, one day, that the poorest of the poor be housed, educated and healed.

Chile is one of the least corrupt nations on earth, while corruption in Indonesia is one of the highest on earth, with the former 'our kind of guy' Suharto entering the record books as the most corrupt ruler of all times.

Indonesia and Chile are two countries that went through a fascist hell; but there are two totally different stories, at the end of that hell.

One country – Indonesia – submitted itself, collaborated and in the end failed, collapsed, became much like some of those unfortunate nations of sub-Saharan Africa.

The other fought, proudly, consistently, and won, becoming one of the most habitable nations on earth, with a quality of life comparable to that of the European Union.

One is not able to produce one single decent novel after its great Communist writer – Pramoedya Ananta Toer (a former prisoner of conscience, whose books and manuscripts were burned by Suharto's clique) – passed away. It produces nothing of intellectual value: no quality music or films, no scientific research, no ground-breaking educational concepts.

The other one – Chile – gave birth to some of the greatest modern writers, poets, filmmakers and architects. And some of the best wine!

The Indonesian model is frightening, but it can be defeated. It succeeds only when the people refuse to fight, when they submit to terror.

In Indonesia individuals are expected to surrender to brutal family and religious control. From birth, people here are conditioned: they live with fear, which is confused with 'love'. First it is the potent fear of father, then of the priest, of the teacher. And then it progresses to fear of the military and capitalist dictatorship. In the end it becomes a paralyzing fear of 'everything', which stops every rebellion at the embryonic stage.

It is pathetic and depressing. It is working. But definitely not everywhere! Rebelliousness works better. It has been working all over Latin America, including Chile. 'Jakarta came', but was fought, and thrown to the dogs.

But, as a result of the joint efforts of local and Western propaganda, the success of Latin America is absolutely unknown in Indonesia. And there is no one screaming in Jakarta at those brutal faces of the elites: "Watch out, bandits, Santiago is coming!"

Andre Vltchek is a novelist, filmmaker and investigative journalist. He has covered wars and conflicts in dozens of countries. His discussion with Noam Chomsky [On Western Terrorism](#) is now going to print. His critically acclaimed political novel [Point of No Return](#) is now re-edited and available. [Oceania](#) is his book on Western imperialism in the South Pacific. His provocative book about post-Suharto Indonesia and the market-fundamentalist model is called ["Indonesia - The Archipelago of Fear"](#). He has just completed the feature documentary, ["Rwanda Gambit"](#) about Rwandan history and the plunder of DR Congo. After living for many years in Latin America and Oceania, Vltchek presently resides and works in

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