

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training  
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

**AMBASSADOR MARSHALL GREEN**

*Interviewed by: Robert J. Martens*  
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## INTERVIEW

*Q: My name is Robert J. Martens. I'm a retired Foreign Service Officer who will be conducting an Oral History Interview with retired Ambassador Marshall Green. This interview is taking place at Ambassador Green's home in Washington DC on the morning of May 12, 1987. The interview will be confined largely to Ambassador Green's service as the American Ambassador to Indonesia from 1965 to 1969, a period of momentous change in Indonesia that began with the closing days of President Sukarno's almost total power and a time of tremendous anti-Americanism. This was followed by the failed communist coup shortly after his arrival, the destruction of the three million and a half strong Indonesian Communist Party, the rise of General Suharto, and the gradual decline of President Sukarno.*

*Indonesia's close alliance with what was then a very radical and aggressive communist China gave way to an Indonesia that remains non-aligned but in a way that is far more balanced and friendly to the West. These changes were accomplished by the Indonesians themselves. But sensible American policies of friendly restraint helped to insure that the American role was helpful and encouraging and the hostility of the Sukarno era could be overcome. As ambassador to Indonesia in this time of tremendous change, Marshall Green was largely responsible for a sound, restrained and subtle policy approach that led to one of the most significant pro-Western developments of the post-War era. Before I turn to Ambassador Green I want to say a few words about his overall career. Most of that career was spent in East Asia. As a young officer, Marshall Green was an aide to Ambassador Joseph Grew in Tokyo on the eve of World War II. After service in the Navy during the war, Ambassador Green returned to the Foreign Service serving in several countries in Europe and Asia. By 1960, he was Deputy Chief of Mission in Seoul and Chargé d'Affaires during the time of the coup d'etat that brought Park Chung Hee to power - a coup that Green openly opposed. He was later Consul General in Hong Kong when that was the center of American China watching.*

*He returned to Washington to be a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State largely concerned with Southeast Asia problems before going to Jakarta as ambassador. After his four years as ambassador to Indonesia he became Assistant Secretary for East Asia Affairs during those momentous years of Nixon's first term, the period of the Nixon doctrine, of gradual reduction of US involvement in Vietnam, and, finally, of the opening to China. He was the senior professional diplomat accompanying President Nixon and Henry Kissinger to China. Ambassador Green became ambassador to Australia. He has retained a keen interest in foreign affairs and among other things he is one of this country's leading authorities on population issues. The above sketch of Marshall Green's career is intended for context only. I hope that significant aspects of his career will be covered by other oral history interviews, but this interview relates only to the Indonesian experience.*

*Mr. Ambassador, you arrived in Indonesia in June or July of 1965 I believe. Can you tell me your impressions of Indonesia's political orientation at that time and the state of US-Indonesia relations?*

GREEN: Indonesia was clearly under the full control of President Sukarno who in turn depended in part on the strong support of the PKI, which was the Communist Party of Indonesia and the dominant party of that country at that time. Sukarno had totally neglected the economy and the economic issues that were threatening his country; he was moving ahead toward expropriating foreign companies including important American companies like CalTex and Goodyear. The state of our relations at that time was obviously bad and getting worse. We were reducing our presence in Indonesia and our aid programs. We were still trying to get along with Sukarno since he was the only effective force in Indonesia and Indonesia was such an important country. However, already by 1964, our government was split on how far we should go in playing up to Sukarno or opposing him. Our ambassador at that time was Howard Jones, rather a saint of a man, who had a close friendship with Sukarno and tended to see the best in all people. Although he was quite aware of Sukarno's shortcomings and the dangers that he posed to our country, Howard Jones, nevertheless, believed very firmly that the best thing that we could do, pending the time when maybe Sukarno would change or things would change for the better, was to just muddle along, continuing our aid program, although reducing it somewhat but in all events to keep in close touch with Sukarno personally, attending his parties and playing up to him and not insulting him unnecessarily, in the hope that some day conditions might turn out to be better.

As far as my own arrival on the scene, Sukarno hated to see Jones go and saw in me a different type of diplomat, one that was perhaps best described as a no-nonsense type, a man who was not going to play the Jones game. Therefore Sukarno made life rather uncomfortable for me. My arrival was attended by signs all over the streets of Jakarta saying "Green go home". Under one of those signs someone had scrawled in lipstick "And take me with you". So I always had faith, especially in the students who later on played a very major role in Sukarno's demise. When I presented my letters shortly after arrival, maybe within two weeks, there was a big affair at the palace. Thousands of guests were there. I was attired in a white business suit, as indeed all my principal officers wore. We all lined up facing Sukarno and some of his 105 cabinet members in the Istana (which is the palace)--at which time I then read my carefully prepared remarks that had been cleared in Washington for the occasion and in which we said all the nice things we could possibly say about Indonesia and its president. Then I stepped back and Sukarno stood forward and delivered a terrific blast against American foreign policy. Well, you know, on occasions like that diplomats oftentimes leave the room, but I decided that I had no choice but to stay. When he finished, Sukarno then introduced me to the leading guests. Our voices were being carried by microphones all over the room, everyone was listening, so this is how I got back at Sukarno. When he introduced me to the third-ranking person in the Foreign Office, a woman who was one of his many former mistresses, Madam Supeni, who is a very beautiful woman, I said to her, very loud so that everybody could hear: "Madam Supeni, it's a great pleasure to meet you. You know with that beautiful raven hair and flashing eyes and

green sari I really couldn't keep my mind on what the president was saying during his recent remarks. Could you tell me what he said." Well, there was a ghastly silence and Sukarno, who in a way was flattered by the attention I gave to his former mistress, slapped his thigh and laughed and everybody laughed. There was a general sigh of relief around the room.

Well, when that occasion was over, my wife and I went back to the Embassy residence which is about a mile or two away. En route to the embassy we could see large mobs forming in the streets. These were so-called student demonstrators but they looked to me more like what we called Sukarno's goon squad which consisted of betjak (pedicab) drivers and the like, with banners screaming: "Green go home" and all that stuff. The Chief of Protocol of the Indonesian Foreign Office who accompanied us was clearly nervous at what was about to transpire. We had all the gates locked, but the mobs began to swarm all around the residence. I knew that on occasions like these the best thing to do, because I had been told this by members of my staff, was to receive a delegation of these protesters. So we admitted about a dozen of them and they all came in, rather sheepishly, except for one or two of their organized leaders who were probably dyed-in-the-wool Sukarnoites, or professional Communists. They came into the residence, we sat around on our porch and they delivered themselves of tirades against the United States. I told them that I would take their points into consideration and inform my government about it and good-bye. Well, they left, but I was humiliated the next day to read in all the government-controlled press that Ambassador Green was cowering and trembling under the sofa while they read this declaration. This was typical of the kind of humiliations to which the American Embassy was daily subjected. You asked me what the relationship was like; I can go on describing a lot more of these encounters that I had with Sukarno and the communists, but I'll stop there.

*Q: You mentioned that there were differences between your approach and that of former Ambassador Jones, and I believe in general there had been rather optimistic hopes by many people in earlier years concerning former President Sukarno's probable intentions once West Irian had been brought to an apparent successful conclusion in 1962, as I recall. Could you tell us from your experience as Deputy Assistant Secretary in the East Asia Bureau prior to your assignment as ambassador, what your impressions were of US policy toward Sukarno and what was the degree of US re-evaluation of its policy?*

GREEN: Since September of 1963 we started to cut back on our military assistance.

*Q: That was when the British Embassy was sacked?*

GREEN: That's right. The flow of MAP (Military Assistance Program) material was cut out and we confined our assistance to items that would not in any way enhance Indonesia's military capabilities because of Indonesia's armed confrontations against Malaysia and the British. However, the Indonesian Army had many members who were our friends. We regarded the Indonesian Army as perhaps in the long run containing the elements that might save the situation in Indonesia. We did not like to do that which cut back our contacts with them. So we did continue to give civic action type support to the Indonesian military and we continued to receive Indonesian military in our advanced schools which turned out to be

a very good investment. But back in Washington there was a growing rift among Secretary Rusk's advisors as to how we should be handling the whole Indonesian situation. I might start by saying that Dean Rusk in my opinion was one of our great Secretaries of State, but, as far as Indonesia was concerned, he never was very interested in Indonesia. He reacted so strongly to the Indonesian attacks on Malaysia and the British that he stood back from Indonesian affairs leaving them in other officials' hands, two in particular: one was Bill Bundy, who was the Assistant Secretary at that time--I was his Deputy--and, on the other hand, to Averell Harriman who was Senior advisor to the Secretary of State in his capacity as Under Secretary for Political Affairs. Averell Harriman was very much of the Jones' school. His background experience had been Europe, but he was deeply interested in the developing world, recognizing Indonesia's importance and Indonesia's importance tended to intrude very much on his policy views as to how Indonesia should be handled. His message seemed to be: "We shouldn't do that which would affront Indonesia. We have been too European oriented, we have to make up for the colonial past." All of that tended to make him sympathetic to the Jones' school of thought and he had backers in the National Security Council staff like Mike Forrestal, and in the CIA like Bob Komer. Those two in particular were strong supporters of the Harriman-Jones' school of thought. On the other hand, Bill Bundy was so tied up with Vietnam that most other responsibilities in the area devolved into my hands, including Indonesia.

We had on our staff David Cottrell who was the officer in charge of Indonesian affairs and who opposed the appeasement line. He believed that Indonesia needed a good punch, that the best way to turn things around was to hold Indonesia at arms' length and not give in. He, you might say, was the opposite pole from Jones. I tended to side with Cottrell on this. I wouldn't express myself perhaps so forthrightly as he did sometimes. He was not a man to mince words and he was a marvelous lampoonist. Anyway David had a good deal of influence on my thinking.

We had a showdown early in 1965. At that time it was decided to send Ellsworth Bunker out to Indonesia to take a hard look at the situation. I had several meetings with Ellsworth whom I came to respect as a seasoned diplomat. He was balanced, objective, and middle of the road.

He had a very successful trip to Indonesia. I was not with him, but I talked to him before and after his trip and I was impressed with the line that he took in his conversations with Sukarno. He said something which I had long believed. We had too large a presence in Indonesia. He recommended a reduction in terms of Sukarno's own interests, as well as our own, in order to present a smaller target to the strong nationalistic emotions of the Indonesians. Therefore he was recommending to our government that there be a reduction in the size of our Embassy and of our programs. In other words, he carried out very diplomatically the whole idea of reducing our presence and standing back a bit from events. That was the same policy approach I pursued later on when I was named Ambassador to Indonesia.

I was visiting Korea in the Spring of 1965 when a telegram was received from the White House asking: was I interested in being ambassador to Indonesia and had I any reasons to have reservations about taking it on? I replied that I would be delighted - no, not delighted-but I would be glad to take on this challenging assignment. So I did. So that brings us back to the time of my arrival. I knew from Jones' letters, because he and I were in close touch, that it was not going to be any bed of roses.

*Q: The so-called Gestapo coup occurred on September 30/October 1, 1965 not long after you arrived. There have been various accounts of what this was about. Can you tell us what happened?*

GREEN: The most important thing to bear in mind in that connection is that Sukarno had been pressing for a Nasakom government, which was a blending of nationalism, religion and Communism. That's how you get the Nasakom, the "a" being religion (for the Indonesian word agama). Now at this point Sukarno was favoring the Communists but he had as his principal opponents the Army. That doesn't mean the Army was not obeying his commands, because they were. But Sukarno knew very well that most army officers were anti-Communists and so did the Communists.

At this time Sukarno's health was deteriorating. He long had had kidney and other ailments which appeared to be intensifying. Sukarno consulted both modern Western doctors as well as traditional Chinese doctors who would come down to see him. The word got around that his health was deteriorating and he might not be long for this world. The PKI (the Communist Party) was clearly fearful that if Sukarno should suddenly leave the scene, the Army would crush the Communists, which is probably what would have happened. Hence the PKI, probably with Sukarno's connivance, raised charges about there being a council of generals that was going to do what they feared, in other words they flushed out into the public domain the possibility, the probability, that the Army would move against them, that they had to act while Sukarno was still around to neutralize the generals. This was the setting for the Communist attempted coup. They pulled the coup on the thirtieth of September, actually in the early hours of October one in which they succeeded in killing five or six top generals but they missed out on Nasution and Suharto. They almost got Nasution. Suharto was away and apparently escaped for that reason. The grisly way the generals were killed had a great deal to do with the popular reaction afterward. Circumstantial evidence would indicate that, as soon as the PKI coup succeeded, Sukarno would then set up a Nasakom government possibly in Jogjakarta or in Jakarta. But the coup misfired and misfired very badly. The Communists were actually in control of Jakarta for less than a day.

*Q: There have been charges by some that the Embassy or CIA was involved and was behind General Suharto and the Army. What is your response to that?*

GREEN: There was absolutely no Embassy or CIA involvement in the coup or behind it in any shape or form. I know that the charge was raised which is one of the reasons why one of the first things that I did when I learned about this coup, particularly when it failed, was to

caution Washington about claiming credit or saying that we anticipated this event. Our credit was that of a surf board rider who came through the thundering surf unscathed ashore. We didn't create the waves: we only rode the waves ashore. One of the first things I did was to send a telegram, Bob Rich I think drafted it, and said in so many words to shut up. As a matter of fact, my friend Howard Jones was beginning to write a series of articles for the Washington Post, which he had contracted to do a week before the abortive coup. Howard Jones recognized the situation and canceled them. It was a time for us to be quiet. By keeping quiet, the American role, such as it was and laudable as it was, has never received adequate notice.

*Q: I remember myself from that time that we were riding around town for the next two or three days trying to find out what was going on because it was very difficult to understand and it was only two days later when we really understood that Sukarno wasn't dead. We thought at first that he might have been assassinated.*

GREEN: We were just as puzzled as everybody else. The night of the coup I had been out in the kampongs (villages) with my New Zealand colleague in a betjak looking at some wayang shows. When we came back I heard or saw nothing unusual in the streets. That was about one o'clock in the morning. The actual attack took place at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. I came down to the office at 8 the following morning. There were some strange military stationed along the street. I couldn't identify them nor could our military attaché, Willis Ethel. The radio station seemed to be in the hands of the coup group and orders were being issued in the name of a Colonel Untung - a name unknown to all the diplomats. Even so, we weren't sure how extensive the coup control was. Was it a real coup d'etat or what? We were just as puzzled as the whole community.

*Q: Can you give the atmosphere during the next week or so that followed as to conditions in the Embassy? How people reacted to it? How you reacted? How we gradually began to understand what was taking place?*

GREEN: Well we did come gradually to understand what was taking place partly through our own officers who were fanning out, partly from radio announcements and the like, partly from communications with other officials and our diplomatic colleagues. But it soon became apparent that the coup was effectively over, except for fighting in the Mount Merapi area. The RPKAD, assisted by elements of the Siliwangi Division, moved swiftly to rout the coup group, but the military refrained from arresting Sukarno. Sukarno continued to be president, albeit a weakened and suspect president. It was a very uncertain, potentially explosive situation.

The biggest problems I faced with Washington was over evacuating Americans. George Ball and Sam Berger (who had succeeded me in the FE Bureau in the Department) had set up a telecom with our Embassy. Flanked by my principal officers, I then discussed the situation through the telecom for half a day with Washington. First of all, they asked for our assessment of what had happened and they urged evacuation of all American dependents. We said that none of the other diplomats were leaving town, that, as a matter of fact, it was

almost impossible to move around, that we couldn't even get to the airport. Since the city was under curfew, it would be very difficult to carry out any kind of evacuation of Americans. The best thing and the safest thing for Americans to do was just to stay home, stay off the streets. The few we needed in the office went there. We would decide later what should be done. But a very nervous Washington refused to accept that advice and we were told to evacuate, but they at least acknowledged that we did not have to evacuate right away. We should evacuate Americans as soon as possible. Although we did not agree with that order, we had to carry it out. I do remember calling all the Americans together saying this is "the Declaration of No-dependence" because all dependents are going to have to leave. My wife was very upset by this order and thought that at least she should stay. Of course a lot of the senior officers felt that way, recognizing that the wives were playing an important role in the Embassy. Nevertheless we did have to evacuate all dependents, which we did over the next several weeks.

*Q: The Embassy had been cutting down a great deal already in its personnel staff...*

GREEN: That's right.

*Q: AID had largely gone, and USIA, I believe, had been reduced to one person.*

GREEN: We had a small staff. As a matter of fact it was one-tenth the size of the mission that I was in charge of in Korea sometime earlier, to show you how small we were relative to other US embassies.

*Q: By this time, as things began to unfold, the Army, particularly General Suharto, was taking charge, how soon did we have contact with General Suharto and with the Indonesian military generally?*

GREEN: I don't believe I had any talk with General Suharto until May 29th, 1966 which was about nine months later on. I did see Suharto sometimes at a public function, we'd nod at each other, but I'm talking about meeting with him privately. From the beginning we recognized the importance of establishing some contacts at authoritative levels of the government, which meant Suharto, and Malik. Malik was effectively the Foreign Minister. He had been Minister without Portfolio and he was clearly a man who knew what was going on and had strong sympathies for Suharto and Suharto for him. It was largely through Colonel Willis Ethel, our Army Attaché, who knew Suharto's aide--they were good personal friends --that I carried on a relationship with Suharto for the next nine months. I did meanwhile have a relationship with Adam Malik. I saw him from time to time. It was almost always in a sort of clandestine setting. I would meet him in someone's house and in that way I had a very clear idea what Suharto thought and what Malik thought and what they were proposing to do, and it all made a great deal of sense to me. In fact I was impressed with Suharto from the beginning. He was rational, pragmatic, balanced, objective and also modest. He had no pretensions. He was a professional soldier and a man of the people. His parents had a very small farm in Central Java. They couldn't even afford a bullock to plow the field. He was not what you would call a sophisticated thinker but he

was ready to listen to the right people. Meanwhile we began having contacts with other people in the government, particularly in the economic ministries. Many of these people had had advanced training in the United States, most of them at Berkeley, so they were called the Berkeley Mafia. Thus we began to discuss issues with officials who had effective responsibilities in this new government. Sukarno, of course, meanwhile continued to be president and this gave rise to a whole series of problems which we can talk about subsequently. I'm simply talking about the problem of communication with the new government. One of the first things that I did for Suharto - they didn't ask for any assistance but clearly they were in need of assistance -- was entirely on my own, I ordered that all 14 of the walkie-talkies that we had in the Embassy for emergency communications be handed over to Suharto. This provided additional internal security for him and his own top officers, but the real reason was to show that we recognized that their safety was that important to our country. I reported this to Washington and received a most gratifying telegram back from Bill Bundy who always gave me great support as did Sam Berger and Frank Underhill. Another way we assisted Indonesia - which was in terrible financial straits - the interest rate was 2% a day at one point - was through a secret arrangement that was legal. We didn't have to have Congressional approval. We gave Indonesia medicines as permitted by law. We realized that they were not going to need all those medicines and they sold some of them to earn critically needed foreign exchange. We are not talking about large amounts. It was quite clear we were dealing with a new government that had its sights set on that which was congenial to our own foreign policy aims and those of Indonesia's neighbors. It was a great moment in history.

*Q: After the September 30th affair, as it is called, the Indonesian Communist Party or the PKI as it has been referred to several times, was almost totally destroyed in the months that followed. At that time it had been one of the largest Communist parties in the world. It was something like three and a half million full members and about twenty million perhaps, an estimate, of the members of various front organizations. People were surprised by this rapid collapse, and by the fact that it did not fight like the Chinese had in the '30s. Why do you think this collapse occurred so rapidly?*

GREEN: I don't know, and I believe, Bob, that you probably know more about this than anybody, but, for my part I would say that clearly one of the reasons was the very size of the Indonesian Communist Party which some claim was the largest in the world..

*Q: Outside the Soviets and the Chinese...*

GREEN: But it came mighty close to being as large as theirs. I mean you're talking about millions of people. Now when you have that many in a country like Indonesia you're dealing with a lot of people who don't know much about Communism. And when you spread it out that thin you're obviously bringing in a lot of people that are not going to be very good in the crunch. They certainly were not properly trained and disciplined so that the whole structure, cadres and so forth, was eminently weak. If anything happens of a cataclysmic nature it is going to blow it all away. I think that is fundamentally the reason

why the Party collapsed so readily. They obviously couldn't stand up against the Army and the strains of the moment.

*Q: The strategy also was to rely almost totally on Sukarno. So it was kind of a revolution from the top that had its great advantages when Sukarno was riding high but when this sudden failure occurred, Sukarno's prestige was rapidly eroded and the PKI was caught with their fingers in the cookie jar. So Sukarno could not really support them completely. Their total reliance on Sukarno was then a weakness because they had no reserve strength really.*

GREEN: I think there is another fact too that might be worthy of mentioning and that is that the PKI did have particularly close connections with the Chinese Communist Party, and the Chinese basically are unpopular in Indonesia. The association of the PKI with the Chinese, in the last analysis, put them in a more exposed position.

*Q: There have been many reports, of course, of the thousands or even hundreds of thousands of people that died in the cataclysm that followed. Many of these being Communists in Central and East Java particularly, in Bali, in north Sumatra; many of them probably were not, they were people like those you mentioned who may have had nominal connections with the Communist Party but who had been induced to join the front organizations. No one really knows the total of this. Maybe the story has been overstated. There are some of us who believe that the numbers killed were probably much less, but nobody really knows. What is your view of that?*

GREEN: I share your view that probably the figure was less than we reported. I was called back to Washington in early February, 1966. We were beginning to receive reports of killings already in November 1965. Most of the killings seemed to have taken place in October, but the reports were vague. There were no photographs. Nobody in our Embassy saw any bodies. Nor did we meet anybody who had seen the killings. They were all rumors. As I said, President Johnson called me back to Washington in early February and I knew one of the questions that they were going to ask me in Washington was how many people were killed. We didn't have any idea, so I asked everybody in our country team to put down on paper how many they guessed were killed and I averaged it out. The result was three hundred thousand, so when I was asked in Washington how many were killed I said "We don't know, but if we had to make a wild guess it was probably around three hundred thousand." I should have said about three hundred thousand, plus or minus two hundred and fifty thousand, that would have been probably closer to the truth. But our report leaked out, and the three hundred thousand figure was the one that came to be more or less generally accepted.

*Q: I remember that Henry Heymann, after going down to Surabaya as the consul general, it was one of the areas where there had been considerable killings, he went out a number of times when reports came in that the Brantas River was choked with bodies and he never found a body. It was choked with bodies that weren't there, although he did tell me that the British Consul that lived on the bank of the river had seen two.*

GREEN: That was the only report I remember: what the British Consul had told Henry Heymann.

*Q: About two or three months after the September 30 affair occurred, the gradual build-up of resistance to Sukarno's effort to regain power, and as a part of the movement to overcome what was called the old order, or the order in which Sukarno and the Communists had been riding high, the student movement began. This was particularly strong after about January 1966. It began with the University students called KAMI coming out and followed by the high school students called KAPPI. Can you discuss what you feel was behind the student movements, were they entirely spontaneous, were they partly spontaneous, what were their motives. What were they trying to do?*

GREEN: I don't think anything is purely spontaneous. There was a degree of spontaneity in their moves. First of all Sukarno continued to remain on as president. He continued to say things that tended to outrage the students justifying his past actions. I do think that the economic situation probably had something to do with it too. Wild inflation was setting in and devaluation of the rupiah went to one hundredth or more of its earlier value. It was particularly difficult for the students. They didn't have any means of livelihood except the old worthless allowances. They just couldn't afford bus fares or things like that and there was a great deal of resentment. In that situation probably there were people in the Army (of course we know that Sarwo Edhie was one of the principal ring leaders of the students) that saw in the students' movement a good way of bringing pressure on Sukarno to vacate his power or at least to get off the stage. This was better than the military doing it themselves. Also the students in many other countries had done this. I had been in Korea, where the students had brought down Syngman Rhee. Probably the memories of how reversals in other countries had taken place, ousters that had taken place with the use of students, were known to the Army. The student movement was spontaneous to a degree but also manipulated by the military.

*Q: We had no role?*

GREEN: No, not at all. The students had always been friendly to us though. I remember even when Sukarno was in power, driving past truckloads of students with the American flag at the fender of the car; I never took it off. When they saw the American flag, they yelled "Hidup America." I don't remember one student ever making an ugly gesture at the flag.

*Q: Hidup means "long live".*

GREEN: They liked the Americans. And I think Americans generally are seen as outgoing, friendly people. Anyway in the eyes of the students we seemed popular, just as we had been in Korea.

*Q: Well, I think they were quite fed up with what had been taking place, with the old regime. Well, then finally the Army took control in March 1966 some seven months or so after the so-called September 30 affair, the original coup. Why did this happen? Why did it take so long? Was this an Army coup to overthrow Sukarno, or was it something else?*

GREEN: The very fact that it took so long to come about substantiates the view I've held from the very beginning that this was not an Army coup. The Army was caught by surprise. It was the RPKAD supported by elements of the Siliwangi Army division that saved the situation initially, but getting rid of Sukarno took a long time. Nasution was really in charge of the military; he was the senior officer, being the Defense Minister, and the principal leader of the military, and Suharto would probably be number two in the pecking order.

*Q: Nasution was still Minister of Defense, I believe.*

GREEN: That's right.

*Q: He was fired though by [Sukarno in February 1966].*

GREEN: That's right, he was fired, but what happened was never fully reported. I remember very well two or three incidents that are still fresh in my memory. One of them was a palace meeting around December 22nd in 1965 in which Sukarno ordered Nasution to take certain steps

Anyway Nasution backed away from confronting Sukarno. He shrank back in the presence of Sukarno and a gathering at the Istana. Suharto then stepped forward and took responsibility and effectively took power away from Nasution. That was the turning point. Then shortly after that encounter on January 1st, Suharto managed to reverse Sukarno's order known as Directive 6 which was to take over all the foreign companies. There was a meeting of the economic ministers up in Bogor. Suharto arrived there in his helicopter, marched into the conference room, and with his marshal's baton rapped the table and said there was not going to be any taking over of foreign companies. He was talking especially about the oil companies and the possible loss of foreign exchange earnings for the Indonesian government. This was a loss Indonesia couldn't afford and therefore there was not going to be any such Directive. With that he marched out. It was an event that has not been adequately recognized by historians. But I think it was a very important one in which Suharto really asserted his authority over Sukarno, the old order, and in many ways over Nasution or anybody else who might have been vying for the leadership of the country. It was effectively in the beginning of 1966 that Suharto took responsibility for national security.

*Q: Again the final moves. There was a so-called March 11 order by Suharto, before which Sukarno was in a sense trying to get the power back.*

GREEN: Trying to get the power back. I remember in February 1966 talking to my diplomatic colleagues one by one. Most of them thought Sukarno would come back. They thought the military would not be able to handle the economic situation and the country

would begin to fall apart and the military would begin to fight amongst themselves. There was, you might say, an impending battle between certain components of the armed services (the Navy, the Marines, the police, the Air Force, on the one hand- all shot through with communists) and the Army, though there were also pro-communists in the Army. About eleven or twelve Army battalions which were pro-communist were shipped off to some of the outer islands and never heard of again. That raises another question how the Army, Suharto in particular, dealt with the issue of the military purge, which I think again has never been adequately recognized as one of the greatest things he ever did.

*Q: One of the problems too is the inter service rivalries in which the Navy, the Marines...*

GREEN: Well that's what I have been referring to. If the Army had ever moved in and tried to clean up the Marines or the Navy, or the police, or the Air Force, that could have touched off internecine fireworks. The Army didn't. I used to meet with the Minister of the Interior, Basuki Rachmat, to talk about this issue because I considered it crucial: whether Suharto was going to be able to clean up the military without there being fighting among them. This he did. He did it largely by letting each one of the services clean up its own ranks. It took some time, but he gained victory in the long run. The armed forces are today united to a degree they never were in the old days.

*Q: You mentioned earlier the evacuation of dependents that was ordered from Washington in the early stages. However, they returned but the struggle between the two sides continued to go on for some six or seven months afterwards and as I recall, the Embassy was even attacked pretty severely in March 1966. All the automobiles were burned in front, there were some Molotov cocktails thrown. Do you think the American community was in severe danger at any point? Was evacuation considered on a wider scale at any point?*

GREEN: I don't think it was considered on a wider scale. No. Were we in danger? It is hard to say. At the time I worried a great deal about it because I was receiving threatening telephone calls - I remember getting one at two o'clock in the morning from a voice that wouldn't identify itself but saying that within hours they were going to attack and burn down the American homes in Kebajoran. Here it was in the middle of the night. What could I do about it? Very little. We were under a strict curfew. The curfew ran from 6:00 to 6:00. We had arrangements whereby on a rotational basis senior officers would stay overnight at the Chancery.

In fact, I spent every night at the Chancery for over a month, sleeping under the conference table, although there wasn't any real fighting going on. Staff members were down there principally because we wanted to be in touch with Washington in case anything happened. You couldn't get to the office from your home if something did happen. There were, of course, persistent rumors that something was going to happen, and, as you say, we did have some occasional attacks on the American Embassy. One of them was quite serious in which one of our people was injured but we had recently built better fences all around the Embassy, it was one of the last things I was able to get from Subandrio.

On that point let me add that it was after the attack on the Indian Embassy back in late August of 1965 that I sent back a telegram to Secretary of State Dean Rusk saying I had just seen the ruins of the Indian Embassy in company with the Thai, the Indian, the British, the Egyptian, the Canadian, and the Australian ambassadors. I warned Secretary Rusk that the same would probably befall us if we continued our current policies. The time has come at long last, I said, where we simply have to issue an ultimatum. I requested instructions to call on Sukarno or Subandrio to tell them that if there was one more act of depredation against any American citizen or American installation, we would require that the Indonesians withdraw their Embassy and consular personnel from the US and that if this resulted in the breaking of relations, so be it.

*Q: This was before the September 30 coup?*

GREEN: This was several weeks before the affair. And it is an important episode because when I told this to Subandrio--I can remember every minute of that conversation--I was amazed that Subandrio seemed almost relieved. He smiled. He seemed to untense. He picked up the phone and called the Chief of Police and said he should meet with me tomorrow and be responsive to the requests I had regarding the security of American property and people. He was good to his promise. The next day I went to Police Headquarters where I was greeted with an honor guard and band that played our national anthem. Our flags were displayed. I can remember being escorted upstairs where all the principal officers of the police were assembled. I sat down, I presented nine or ten requests of what we needed in the way of protection, including that of our consulates in Medan and Surabaya which had been occupied. The Police were good to their promises, including removal of the guards around our Embassy that we knew to be pro-communists. That happened several weeks before the abortive coup.

Turning to January, February, and March of the following year, Sukarno was still around (albeit under suspicion), the economic situation was going from bad to worse, the students were conducting demonstrations up and down the streets, and, by the way, when one of the demonstrations came to our Embassy, its leader told me in confidence they had to demonstrate against us because otherwise they would not be allowed to attack the Chinese Embassy. We all laughed, but I said: "Now be easy on the Chinese; let's not have any real trouble." In this connection, we had the good fortune of having as dean of the diplomatic corps, the Thai Ambassador, Phinit Aksin, a career diplomat. He organized joint diplomatic protests every time an Embassy was attacked in the name of all diplomats in Jakarta, since any attack on a diplomatic installation is a setback to our profession as well as a danger to all diplomats. I'm getting away from the demonstrations. One time our residence was attacked. My wife was there alone, which she still recalls very graphically, but fortunately the attackers were driven off by security forces before any real harm was done.

*Q: My own feeling was there was no real danger until that last week or so before the March 11 order, when the Communists and Sukarno were getting so desperate that they were capable of lashing out...*

GREEN: The lashing out was the danger...

*Q: And that last week, that was only as I recall four or five days before the March 11 order when Suharto took full power that the strong attack on the Embassy occurred.*

GREEN: That was the most serious attack we had. It was clearly by old PKI elements bolstered by the betjak drivers or what I call the goon squads. And they did manage to get into the premises and broke a lot of our windows and forced our people upstairs into the second floor of the chancery which is our strong area where we had iron grills. We set about furiously burning all our records. That was the most serious attack. I recall, Bob, that that attack was lifted by the KAMI and the KAPPI (youth groups). They had just been demonstrating at the Foreign Office when they heard of the attack on our embassy.

*Q: That's right, they were retreating...*

GREEN: They were coming from the Foreign Office where they had done a job, and when they saw us being attacked, they lifted the siege.

*Q: A lot of shots were fired when the troops came in.*

GREEN: But in many ways that was probably the most serious attack we had on the Embassy.

*Q: In fact there were stories as I recall that a larger attack was scheduled for March 11 but fortunately the Army moved, basically the night before and it was all called off.*

*Could you tell us what your instructions or guidance was during this period of long dual authority from the September 30th Affair to March 11.*

GREEN: After October 1965 we pretty much wrote our own instructions. It's amazing how, when you succeed, people turn to you. Furthermore, it was a baffling situation to all of us. In Washington they really didn't know what to do. We talk about getting instructions but who originated the instructions? Well, we did. Two such instructions I mentioned already, one was maintaining a low profile and the other was delivering my ultimatum to Subandrio. It was also our policy to keep in touch with Suharto and Malik and the new economic ministers. We offered limited assistance of the type that I mentioned before, but we were not going to get ourselves involved in any resumption of AID programs until we got the green light from Suharto and Malik. Those were generally our recommendations but our dominant theme was to maintain a low profile, keep out of danger, let things mature.

*Q: Eventually we did get to the point of assisting the Indonesians. You mentioned earlier some of the steps that were taken, they were more of an ad hoc nature. After a while, I recall, multi-lateral aid came in. This was after the March 11 order and the full taking of*

*power by Suharto, Malik and the economic minister group. Could you tell us when this occurred?*

GREEN: The thing I remember most clearly was having to resist very strong pressures both from Washington and from some of my diplomatic colleagues, including the Australians, who were pressing for the resumption of aid to Indonesia by the United States and by other countries. I came under immediate pressure when I was in Washington in early February 1966. Meanwhile I had learned from Suharto and from Malik - largely it was through Malik that I learned about Suharto's wishes - that they did not want US assistance prematurely. Otherwise it might strengthen the Sukarnoists and give them the kind of relief needed in order to pursue their efforts to return to power. Malik's message to me was : "Wait until the Sukarnoists are clearly out. Then we will let you know what we want in the way of aid. We are certainly going to need it some time". My first job was to resist pressures, which I did, almost at the expense of my friendship with colleagues like the Australian Ambassador.

Now I recognized that, when we did resume aid, the Indonesians were likely to ask for a lot of things that we couldn't provide, which would get us off on the wrong foot. We did two things that avoided trouble. Bob Barnett, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs in the Far Eastern Bureau, had been already working on a plan to bring the Japanese and other donor countries into what we came to call the IGGI which is the inter-governmental donor group for giving international assistance to Indonesia. Bob Barnett and his Japanese opposite had devised the concept of the United States giving one third of all foreign economic aid, the Japanese giving one third , and the other donors giving the final third. So that was already being worked on. What I was more concerned about was the other key problem of their asking for that which we couldn't give. So, I worked out with Malik and with Washington what kind of package we could provide. We didn't have any aid appropriation money and therefore we wouldn't be able to provide regular aid until the following year, 1967. That was a long time ahead, but we did have authority under PL 480 to give certain emergency commodity supplies. And so we worked up a package of twenty-six million dollars food and cotton aid, which Washington permitted me to divulge privately to Malik, on the grounds that that was what Malik would ask for.

So when Malik finally called me to his office, in late May 1966, and asked for aid, I offered him this pre-arranged package. He accepted it gratefully in a public gathering and we got off to a good start. Meanwhile Bob Barnett and others were in touch with the Japanese, Dutch, Germans, British, French, Australians and others. So all that worked out pretty well. Of course our initial aid package was peanuts compared to what Indonesia needed but we were able to come through with substantial PL 480 within a few months. One of the main problems we faced was the shortage of PL 480 rice. There was plenty of bulgur wheat in our stockpile but the Indonesians wanted rice and we didn't have it. We pushed bulgur wheat, which they disliked. Trying to change a country's taste, I might say, is impossible.

The formation of the donor group was most successful, resulting in later deliveries of fairly generous packages. It was never enough to satisfy the people around Suharto. Suharto was always gracious enough, but there were people on his staff who made it very difficult for

me to get through to see Suharto. One of the most dismaying experiences that I had when I was in Indonesia was being informed by certain generals that Suharto was very displeased with our economic aid and that it was going to be very difficult for me to see him unless I made it possible; which involved our being more generous with our assistance. Well, we were doing all we could and I deeply resented such tactics. I finally got through to Suharto with the backing of Washington, especially Vice President Humphrey who was particularly helpful to me throughout my four years in Indonesia.

Certain Indonesians were doing all kinds of end runs, visiting Washington and badmouthing the Embassy, but Vice President Humphrey and the State Department gave us solid backing. You know in many ways life was much more complicated during the days when we were coming back into a friendly relationship with Indonesia than in the days when we were being harassed. Our responsibilities were now much greater, and the issues we had to contend with were legion. One of our problems with the Indonesians was how to handle foreign investments and award contracts in a proper fashion. Corruption was rampant and we had to fight off under-the-table ways of doing business. There, again, we had great support from the economic ministers, as well as from Malik.

*Q: These were the habits of earlier times.*

GREEN: That's right. These were the way things were done in Indonesia but were contrary to US law. One of the real showdowns I had was over International Nickel. This was a case that gave me more concern than perhaps any investment issue I had when I was out there. Indonesia was about to award a key contract to a certain company which was not American, on the understanding that that company was going to build, free of charge, a large municipal project. We couldn't do that sort of thing by law, quite apart from the fact we are not inclined to do business that way. It looked as though we were about to lose the contract even though our offer was the best. We battled that right down to the wire. It involved many overseas telephone calls, but finally the problem was worked out. It resulted in Indonesia establishing a method for reviewing bids in which there was an unbiased, objective way of making decisions involving a panel of all the concerned ministries. Thus we were involved in the creation of new machinery for orderly ways of doing business.

*Q: You mentioned earlier your interest in maintaining a low profile and of course one of the attributes of aid is that you often get a very large bureaucracy. Did you have any problem with this? This in a later period after let's say a year or so after the March 11 order came about and there was a time when you were getting the AID appropriations and was there difficulty in keeping the numbers down?*

GREEN: Yes there was trouble. Various US agencies wanted to put more officials in Indonesia than we thought was desirable. We were always fighting against pressure to increase our staff. Of course, we had to have more and more people to deal with increasing aid but the tendency was to keep sending attachés of various sorts, overloading the Embassy administrative services and capabilities and, above all, giving us too high a profile at a time when charges were being made that we were running things in Jakarta. Of course

we were deeply concerned and took the lead on many inter-governmental issues. We were glad to see the Japanese, the World Bank and the IMF taking more and more of the lead.

*Q: Many people said that the American stand in Vietnam had strengthened the resolve of the Indonesian Army and had strengthened the resolve of the moderates so that the failure of the Communist coup in Indonesia might be attributed to some degree to US-Vietnam policy. What do you think of this connection?*

GREEN: The Indonesian cataclysm was far more momentous than has generally been recognized. It was not only important in terms of Indonesia's size, being the fifth most populous nation in the world, and of its location where two oceans and two continents meet. We must remember the time in which this occurred. We were deeply involved in Vietnam, fighting against the North Vietnamese who were backed by the Russians and the Chinese. Thus we were caught between the Communists to the North, and the Sukarno-backed communists in Indonesia. Had Indonesia gone communist, American forces in Vietnam would have been caught in a kind of huge nutcracker. Indonesia came perilously close to going communist. After all, many of the people in the military were on the communist side, the PKI was the dominant party, and Sukarno was definitely pro-communist if not a full-fledged communist. He had the Air Force, the Navy, the Marines, and police on his side and some of the battalions in the Army. Just think of how close Indonesia came to going communist. Supposing they had, then what would have happened? First of all we would have been put in an even more untenable position in Vietnam. All Southeast Asia might have come under communist domination. As it turned out, it was just the other way around, with Indonesia today playing a constructive role in international affairs, enjoying good relations with its ASEAN neighbors. It was a great turnabout. It reversed the whole course of history, not only of that region but probably of the world. The world never grasped the significance of those times.

*Q: I think it is very true. I think that the Sino-Soviet dispute which had gone on up to that time on the basis of a Chinese view that the whole region was going to fall to them and perhaps the whole Third World and this was the heart of the Sino-Soviet dispute for the Soviets argued that the Chinese and the other Asian communists were being overly optimistic. But with the change in Indonesia you had a tremendous turnaround in the nature of that dispute so that it became more of a direct border clash while the Chinese retreated into the Cultural Revolution...*

GREEN: ... certainly, and another thing, remember there had been an extensive non-aligned movement. It was almost crypto-Communist in organization...It embraced much of the developing world including India, even Yugoslavia, but also the so-called non-aligned world of which Indonesia under Sukarno aspired to be the leader; all that came crashing down. We really didn't hear much about that subsequently. We heard, of course, about the North-South problem but that was not communist tinged. The setback that the Russians and the Chinese suffered helped to remove them as a dominant influence in the developing world. The Russians were so set back by this tremendous reversal that they called back all their Ambassadors from that part of the world. Evidently they were not clear

as to how they were going to move. Brezhnev's call for an Asian security arrangement came shortly after that. It was a kind of call for help. Moscow didn't know what to do. Meanwhile the Chinese and the Russians began to point the finger of blame at each other. I'm sure the Russians must have been furious by the way the Chinese had handled or mishandled this coup because it had brought the the Russians low as well as the Chinese. Another thing about the Russians that always occurred to me - you're a greater authority than I am - but it seems to me that at one time the Russians were making a concerted move to gain influence in three key developing countries: (1) Egypt, which was the leading Arab nation, (2) India, which dominated the subcontinent, and (3) Indonesia, which was about one-half of Southeast Asia. Here were to be the three great projections of Russian influence in the developing world. Today Egypt is anti-communist and a constructive force in the Middle East. India is neutral. Indonesia is a member of ASEAN, enjoying good relations with its neighbors as well as with Japan and the west. Indeed, Indonesia in 1965-67 changed the course of world events.

*Q: There have been momentous changes occurring at this time. It was certainly an anomaly that at the very time that criticism of US policy was at its height in the late 1960's that the world was changing at that time more favorably for the United States. You had this tremendous change over in Indonesia you had the retreat of China into itself. You had a couple of years later the passing of Nasser in Egypt and his replacement by a much more moderate figure in Sadat. In Algeria you had the fall of Ben Bella; he was replaced by people who were also tinged by Marxism but not to the same degree that you had before and, in fact, the Afro-Asian conference collapsed just before the September 30th affair. Then you had the fall of Nkrumah in Ghana. Quite a number of these things were taking place and the great hope of the communists was that the Third World after it got its independence would become a target of opportunity. But all they achieved were some minor successes and eventually their hopes were shattered and largely in that period.*

GREEN: Yes the breakdown of democratic centralism in China has been ascribed to China's reversal in Indonesia. Those reversals may also help account for subsequent changes in China's policies - from the extremism of the Cultural Revolution which was so disastrous that it lead to a kind of counter-revolution, under Zhou En-lai. Zhou En-lai was in my opinion one of the greatest men of this century, when measured in terms of the pragmatic trends he brought about in China. Some of this tracks back to the reversals Maoism suffered in Indonesia in 1965-66.

*Q: Let me put just one more question before we close. On the other side of what happened in Southeast Asia, the United States of course had committed itself strongly before the September 30th affair in Vietnam and to what degree do you think the fact that we were in Vietnam bolstered the resolve of the Indonesian Army?*

GREEN: That's a very interesting question deserving study. I do sense that the Indonesian Army probably took heart from the fact that it did have potential outside support. In other words, the Army leaders knew they had friends that they could turn to eventually. Also many of the key officers were sympathetic to the United States and what we stood for. But

if meanwhile Southeast Asia had been overrun by an unopposed North Vietnam, quite clearly they would have become dispirited and they would have been all that more distant from friends. In the psychological stresses of that period, their isolation might have been their undoing. But the knowledge that we were there, that we were prepared to stand up to communism, meant that communism was not an inevitable wave of the future. If we hadn't been opposing the communist tide in Asia, who would? What would have been the sense of the Indonesian Army opposing Sukarno and his communist colleagues in the long run. Maybe the best way to survive would just have been to give in. Therefore I think our role in East Asia, including Vietnam, was probably crucial.

*Q: Someone could say that when the actual attack occurred on the generals on the night of September 30/October 1, the Army had to fight back, they were fighting for their lives, they would have done it anyway. But what you were speaking of was the broader context in which there would have been a dispiritedness there to continue that fight. Furthermore, in the period before the September 30th affair, the Army was under great pressure but General Yani and some of these generals who were killed were standing up at least to a degree to Sukarno, opposing the so called Fifth armed force and opposing a commissar system. This was a major reason why Sukarno and the PKI were moving to carry out this coup, that is because the Army was not buckling under their pressure. And so you had a period leading up to the coup in which the Army stood up but they might not have stood up if they had felt that the situation was hopeless for them anyway because communism was becoming triumphant throughout East Asia.*

GREEN: I don't know enough about the composition and the attitudes of all the different military units; we do know that the Siliwangi division had very determined leadership, but I'm not sure about the other divisions, and the situation in some of the other islands.

Now I agree entirely with what you just said and I think you raised a very important question that somebody ought to run down a bit more, particularly by interviewing some of the Indonesian military.

*Q: If only we could do that.*

GREEN: After all, that's what you are really trying to get at, what they thought, not what we thought they thought.

*Q: True enough. Well thank you very much for your comments and, as I said in the beginning, I hope there will be further interviews on other aspects of your career, particularly the period when you were Assistant Secretary.*

GREEN: Well, thank you, Bob, and I just want to say in closing, that's it's people like you and other Foreign Service Officers with whom I dealt, who were - and are - the core strength of American diplomacy. You talk about this period that I went through, and I said: "I did this, I did that," the fact of the matter is, we all acted together in a collegial way. I don't think there were any real differences amongst us. We didn't always have the same

opinions, but we always came out to the same policy conclusions. They were a distillation of our collective wisdom. You were our expert on communism. You had more knowledge about the Indonesian Communist Party and how it was organized and how to deal with it than anybody else in our mission and possibly in our whole government. And I am glad that you're now working on this problem in trying to bring some of these loose ends together. It's very important because soon all of us who dealt with these events are not going to be around. This is such an important episode in history and yet it has never received the attention you are now giving it.

*Q: Thank you.*

*End of interview*