

Images of Indonesian expansionism

May I comment on one aspect of the article by Brian Martin entitled *Social Defence and the Indonesian Military Threat*. I leave it to others to comment on the merits of his proposed "social defence" and "social attack".

My concern is with the perception of Indonesia as an expansionist militarist power which underlies his argument. Martin is not alone in this perception; it has rapidly become a stereotype in the media and in public opinion in Australia. This stereotype has, in my opinion, owed as much to Australian racist attitudes (the "Yellow Peril") and the experience of the Japanese advance on Australia in World War II as it has to Indonesian actions or expressed intentions.

Indonesian actions and intentions have been portrayed in this country as a sequence of expansionist adventures, starting with the incorporation of West New Guinea, by way of the confrontation of Malaysia, through the invasion of East Timor, to the scenario Martin paints of a military attack on PNG. The sequence of events bears an unholy resemblance to the former "domino theory" of Communist expansion in South-east Asia. In my view, each of these events needs to be understood in its own terms.

Brian Martin's sketch of "Indonesian militarism" links this image of aggressive nationalism with "the military-dominated regime which ... came to power in 1965". He conveys the impression that this regime was responsible for the annexation of

both West Irian and East Timor by a combination of political and military aggression. In fact, the Indonesian claim to West Irian long preceded the emergence of the Indonesian military to its present degree of political power and was accepted as valid by civilians (including the communists) as well as army men. That claim was realised in 1963, when President Sukarno was at the peak of his power and influence.

The Indonesian case for West New Guinea was that it formed part of the territory of the Netherlands Indies, and that the Indonesian government was the successor government to that of the Netherlands Indies. Before Indonesian independence the inhabitants of West New Guinea had the same status as other Indonesians: they were Dutch subjects resident in the Netherlands Indies. Although the Dutch colonial government practised racial discrimination in other ways (eg among Europeans, Foreign Orientals and Natives) it made no such distinction between the different Native ethnic groups (eg between Javanese and Papuans). Indonesian nationalism came into being in the 20th century as a result of the shared experience of Dutch rule in the Indies; indeed, Indonesians as a nation were defined as those the Dutch termed "Natives" (*Inlanders*).

A common position for Australians to take has been to regard the inhabitants of West New Guinea as ethnically distinct from [other] Indonesians and therefore

as entitled to exercise a right of self-determination. This argument is inherently racist in that it assumes that states should be racially homogeneous. From an Indonesian point of view it is also a recipe for the dismemberment of Indonesia, since it would set a precedent which could be followed by many other ethnic groups in the archipelago. This is not a peculiar point of view. Rightly or wrongly, governments do not like secessionist movements.

There are few governments which willingly allow the right of self-determination to peoples under their rule. This is particularly true of most Third World states whose populations are ethnically heterogeneous.

The story of the Indonesian incorporation of West New Guinea has of course been a more complicated one than I have traced here. I certainly don't mean to imply that West Papuan nationalists are not equally genuine in their own nationalism, which was fostered and developed by the Dutch if only in the thirteen years after they had lost the rest of the Indies. My point is only that the Indonesian position on West Irian was neither a product of military rule nor inherently unreasonable. The dynamics of the East Timor annexation were, of course, quite different as they would be in Martin's scenario of an Indonesian attack on PNG...

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ns, I have entally the They do nstitute a ecological to address social or (presently 5.6%, made up largely of middle-class teachers and academics). The Greens attract little support from the working classes or the Trade Unions. This situation will have to be remedied, however, if Petra Kelly and the Greens are to realise their self-

weigh up whether or not such a party would provide a viable political alternative in Australia.

Reference:

Programme of the German Green Party, 1983, Heretic Books, U.K.

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Letters for Peace

In an article in *Peace Studies* (July 1984) by Brian Martin on non-violent "Social Defence and the Indonesian Military Threat", the defeat of the Kapp Putsch in Germany in 1920 was quoted as one piece of evidence for the effectiveness of such action. The backbone of the counter-revolutionary action was the Free Corps which consisted of elements of the defeated German army and who had been responsible for the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in 1918. They were supported by some sections of the Reichswehr, the official German army.

The defeat of the Kapp revolt was the result of various opposing actions in Germany. In Berlin there was a strike of workers. In the Ruhr, the mining and industrial areas of central Germany, and the northern region between Lubeck and Wismar, an armed working class opposed the Putsch. In the Ruhr, against the wishes of the Social Democratic government, 80,000 miners took to arms and drove the Reichswehr and the Free Corps out of the area. This was repeated in other areas. Unfortunately when negotiations on a settlement took place, the workers were betrayed: the demand to expel the Kapp Putsch military leaders from the army was not carried into effect.

It is interesting to observe the myth concerning the peaceful nature of the opposition to the Kapp Putsch. The Putsch was put to an end by a combination of the "chancellor's" (Kapp's) total incompetence and the astonishing effectiveness of a general strike called by the Socialists.

One crucial ingredient in the way the Free Corps was opposed was the use of armed force — this was in fact the main cause of the defeat of Kapp. The Free Corps had been ordered to shoot peaceful strikers.

It seems to me that in this debate



about non-violent opposition what is lacking is some discussion on the kind of organisation that opposes the violence or potential violence with non-violent action. Once the collective action of the Ruhr workers, with their grass-roots action committees which knew what they wanted, was replaced by more orthodox negotiations used to bureaucratic methods, the workers had to retreat. It is the structure of the opposition to force and their ideology that is important.

Richard Curlewis

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