## Images of Indonesian expansionism

May I comment on one aspect of the article by Brian Martin entitled Social Defence and the Indonesian Military Threat. Heave 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 Southeast 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 selfdetermination. 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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## Peace Studies

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nis, I have (presently 5.6%, made up largely of weigh up whether or not such a party entally the middle-class teachers and academics). would provide a viable political alter-The Greens attract little support from native in Australia. nstitute a the working classes or the Trade Reference: ecological Unions. This situation will have to be to address remedied, however, if Petra Kelly and Programme of the German Green

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part from In an article in Peace Studies (July the army was not carried into effect. it has pro-1984) by Brian Martin on non-violent , but more "Social Defence and the Indonesian concerning the peaceful nature of the h is obtain-

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own letter. action was the Free Corps which con- by the Socialists. sisted of elements of the defeated carry more German army and who had been the Free Corps was opposed was the wanting a responsible for the murder of Rosa use of armed force - this was in fact ppy, one is Luxemburg and Karl Liebnecht in the main cause of the defeat of Kapp. re. It also 1918. They were supported by some The Free Corps had been ordered to

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 Lubech 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

It is interesting to observe the myth Military Threat", the defeat of the opposition to the Kapp Putsch. The Kapp Putsch in Germany in 1920 was Putsch was put to an end by a comquoted as one piece of evidence for bination of the "chancellor's" (Kapp's) the effectiveness of such action. The total incompetence and the astonishing you might backbone of the counter-revolutionary effectiveness of a general strike called One crucial ingredient in the way

the Kapp Putsch military leaders from

ddresses of sections of the Reichswehr, the official shoot peaceful strikers.

It seems to me that in this debate

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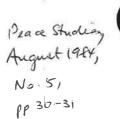
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about non-violent opposition what is lacking is some discussion on the kind of organisation that opposes the violence or potential violence with non-violent action. Once the collective action of the Ruhr workers, with their grass-roots action committees 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



- The Peace Research and Resource Centre was established at a public meeting in Brisbane in April
- The aims of the Centre are to encourage and promote actions, seminars, meetings, and information exchanges to do with peace, disarmament, non-violence, and social justice. The Centre seeks to place itself at an interchange point between activist peacemakers, the mass media, interested scholars and academics at Universities and Colleges of Advanced Education and the general public.

· Meetings of the Centre are held at 7.30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of the month at 5 Landsborough Terrace, Toowong, and a number of committees meet

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