

EAST TIMOR MUST STAY FREE

East Timor is in danger. In danger from Indonesia. In danger from the Whitlam government. In danger from Portugal. In danger from civil war. For the first time since 1613, East Timor has enjoyed — or survived — a brief month of independence. Now Indonesia, Australia and two East Timor parties, the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT) and the Timorese Popular Democratic Association (APODETI) fight to rob the young nation of the freedom it so recently and precariously won. FRETILIN wants to make a present of this freedom to Portugal.

The tragedy is that, in the face of menaces both from within and without, the political leadership in which East Timor's workers and peasants placed their hopes has proved unreliable, cowardly and vacillating. Even now, with the bulk of East Timor under its control, far too late, and after too much bloodshed, the leaders of the Revolutionary Front of East Timor (FRETILIN) clearly do not know what to do. In the situation, before August 10, when Portuguese colonialism had lost all firm grasp on power, where Timorese soldiers under Portuguese command were looking to FRETILIN as the real power, and when FRETILIN had the support of the National Workers' Union, the National Union of Students, the Teachers' Association and overwhelming majority of the poor in both city and country, the FRETILIN leaders postponed any action until the Portuguese colonists deigned to call an election . . . in October, 1976. While FRETILIN was dreaming under parliamentary narcosis, UDT, the party of the coffee plantation owners, and police and the Portuguese Fascists seized the revolutionary opportunity FRETILIN had let fall, and took power by armed force, massacring part of the Dili leadership of FRETILIN, murdering Antonio Barbosa, Antonio Nascimento and Ali Alkatiri. Instead of relying on its armed strength — which events have shown was ample — FRETILIN relied on the colonial rulers' promise of elections, its opponents' peaceful intentions, the parliamentary speeches of Andrew Peacock and the uncritical backing of the Communist Party of Australia. History has subsequently disclosed that, for a revolution, this is not quite enough. Now, FRETILIN has won back, after prolonged and bitter fighting, the power it allowed a miserably small and desperately unpopular party to steal from under its pillow, but it has won this back at a cost in lives, military equipment and popular demoralisation which can only lessen the difficulties for Indonesia of an invasion of East Timor. FRETILIN would not even be in power if the UDT had not forced FRETILIN to seize the power in self defence. UDT will, of course, take the initiative of inviting the Indonesians in "to fight Communism" once it can no longer hold its remaining enclave in Bacau against FRETILIN. FRETILIN will need every ounce of tenacity, will and intelligence, not to mention every available bullet it possesses to retain power for more than a fortnight before the threat of Indonesian invasion.

But FRETILIN has won the power against its will only in order to give it away again. The front page of the latest issue of Tribune announces — as if it were something to be proud of — that "FRETILIN, now controlling East Timor, invited the Portuguese government to resume authority over the island, taking charge [of] decolonisation, and of elections, due in October 1976". All the blood, all the death, all the agony, all the struggle is to count for nothing because the FRETILIN leaders have decided to prove they are moderate, responsible, nationalist leaders and not, as Malcolm Fraser claims, Communists. After this exhibition of what moderation means the East Timor people can be expected to prefer communism. If the FRETILIN leadership having won independence, wishes only to return the sovereignty to the Portuguese it should abandon power to a leadership which will keep the freedom which has been won. This can only be a Communist leadership but a variety of Communism which has nothing in common with the Australian Communist Party which has never voiced one

word of criticism of FRETILIN. To support immediate East Timor independence means to fight the Ramos Horta and the FRETILIN leadership who have now openly betrayed the independence struggle to the continued adulation of the CPA.

Anyone, like the so-called Campaign for Independent East Timor, which presumably now supports continued Portuguese colonial rule, calling for “Australian Mediation” is selling out to Australia and Indonesian imperialism. The Whitlam government has made it crystal clear that it will support Indonesia to the hilt, Australian presence in East Timor can only cover for Indonesian annexation in the present situation. NO “MEDIATION!” PRESERVE EAST TIMOR INDEPENDENCE! While the fighting between UDT and FRETILIN was going on, the imperialist powers kept silence as long as UDT had a chance of victory. Now there is peace under FRETILIN rule, they call for “intervention”. Australia and Indonesia fear not war, but peace in East Timor.

FRETILIN must now necessarily split the bankrupt leaders who want to surrender independence and the rank and file who want to keep what has been won by hard fighting are now on collision courses. The FRETILIN leaders owe their rise to strikers they first organised and then abandoned to become “nationalist leaders” on first-name terms with Andrew Peacock. Now they have organised East Timor, only to abandon it to Dr Almeida Santos, who no doubt deigns occasionally to buy them drinks. The left wing of FRETILIN must reverse this trajectory of class and national treason. Only on the basis of the labour domination of the national struggle which won the present leaders their position can new leaders replace the old this time to win freedom for their class and independence for their country rather than betray both. Only a break with nationalist ideology to fight for a workers’ and peasants’ government can give East Timor leaders who can hold the national independence the old FRETILIN leaders were forced to win and now want to surrender.

An international orientation of trying to appease Indonesia by proving that FRETILIN is non-communist and non-aligned by surrenders of power to Portugal and by treaties guaranteeing non-alignment is utopian. For the Indonesian generals, any party with worker support, even if that party contemptuously ignores the interests of its supporters, is too left-wing by their definition, and, any recognition, however small, of East Timor’s right to self-determination threatens the entire Indonesian prison of nationalities. A treaty guaranteeing “real” non-alignment simply guarantees permanent imperialist interference in East Timor politics. It goes without saying that a leadership so rotten it will surrender independence to the Portuguese is genuinely non-communist and non-aligned; such “non-communism” will however only turn the East Timor people toward communism while in no way obstructing Indonesian ambitions. Portugal will unhesitatingly sell out East Timor to Indonesia. It is no accident the Portuguese negotiator Saritos went to Djakarta before he went to Diii.

The only way to prevent an Indonesian attack is to turn to the enemies of Indonesia, and these enemies are many even if there are not many governments among them. Attacked and threatened with invasion for their alleged communism and their bad example to other nationalities in the Indonesian archipelago, an honest East Timor revolutionary party would decide it might as well be hung — the word is used advisedly

— for a sheep as for a lamb. An appeal to the Soviet Union and China would at least demonstrate that these “revolutionary” powers have not the least interest in revolution in South Asia and would at any rate constitute a more hopeful course than appealing to Australia, Indonesia’s most fervent ally. An appeal from the Stalinist governments who prefer co-existence to revolution to the workers

and peasants of Indonesia, Malaysia and Niugini would start off the avalanche of national uprisings Indonesia most fears and which therefore is East Timor's main hope. In Australia East Timor can rely, not on the Whitlam government hopelessly enmeshed in its own and its "allies" imperialism, but on the forces represented by the Darwin waterside workers who blacked cargo bound for the UDT forces. The Portuguese workers too have yet to say their word. Such allies as these throughout the world are East Timor's real strength.

On East Timor, the record of the Australian so-called "revolutionary" left has been abysmal. It is not only the Communist Party which has shown that, independent of Stalinism, Moscow and Peking, it can make mistakes as bad as any Stalin ever made in giving the same uncritical support to Ramos Horta's constitutional illusions as it gave the Aliende's. The Socialist Labor League, the Social Party and the Socialist Workers' League have all followed slavishly behind the CPA. The Spartacist League, as usual, has been too busy slandering all other groups on the left to publish a line about East Timor. The Communist League has a position on every Portuguese colony except that closest to their doorstep. Such silences are contemptible. Australia needs a new revolutionary Marxist party

AUSTRALIA, INDONESIA AND PORTUGAL GET OUT OF TIMOR'

A WORKERS AND PEASANTS GOVERNMENT TO SECURE INDEPENDENCE'

NO SELLOUT TO PORTUGAL OR INDONESIA!

SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ALL NATIONALITIES IN INDOCHINA, MALAYSIA AND NIUGINI'

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