

INDONESIA MUST NOT INVADE EAST TIMORI

EAST TIMOR now stands on the brink of Indonesian invasion. Troops crossed from Indonesia 20km into East Timor on September 8. A second incursion of 60 Indonesian troops, armed with heavy machineguns and accompanied by members of the Timorese Popular Democratic Association (APODETI) took place on September 14. Some of these troops may come from a tribal group of 138 Timorese which has been in training under Indonesian officers in Indonesian Timor since last year. A battalion or more of paratroops have been flown from Madium into Indonesian Timor on September 11 and 12.

On September 12, three (now six) Indonesian Navy warships blockaded Dili, allegedly to prevent arms from reaching the Revolutionary Front of East Timor (FRETILIN) now in control of all East Timor. Major General El Tan the governor of East Timor in a statement of blackmail, declared that starvation — a consequence of the Indonesian blockade cutting food supplies — would hit East Timor within two weeks and Indonesia, generously and out of humanitarian impulse, would supply food provided Portugal allowed Indonesian troops to “restore order”. One report from an Indonesian source said one warship had landed its ships commander and some troops in Dili to establish a three-day ceasefire between alleged “warring parties.” The warship was allegedly later withdrawn after landing the troops at Portuguese request. The tiny pro-Indonesian party APODETI, according to Indonesia, has members throughout East Timor who are prepared to launch guerilla war with light arms at any time. The Timor Democratic Union (UDT) the party which held Dili for 10 days before its defeat by FRETILIN forces, has organised demonstrations and issued statements from Indonesian Timor where its headquarters now are calling for East Timor’s “integration” into Indonesia.

In this crisis, FRETILIN, the effective government of East Timor, continues to submit to the authority of the Portuguese colonial government. The activity of Portugal over the past week has been an effort to organise, under direct Indonesian pressure, a conference between FRETILIN and the two parties with headquarters in Indonesian Timor UDT and APODETI who Indonesia claims are “the warring parties”. In actual fact, UDT and APODETI are only able to influence events in East Timor through Indonesian arms, and UDT only began supporting “integration” with Indonesia once it had lost all popular support within East Timor. FRETILIN, rightly, and consistently with its past policies, has refused “negotiations” with these paper tigers. Instead, it has requested direct negotiations between itself and Portugal, which Portugal has refused, while Indonesia has warned direct negotiations between Portugal and FRETILIN would lead it to the verge of invasion. FRETILIN’s “diplomacy” toward Portugal has proved a no exit road. Portugal has at every point crawled before Indonesian ultimatums. Indonesia, ungrateful for Portuguese subservience, has issued statements claiming that Portugal is no longer in control of East Timor. The Indonesian foreign minister, Adam Malik, gave Portugal on September 15, a “first warning” to “restore Order” — an order only endangered by Indonesian gifts of arms to would-be anti-FRETILIN guerillas. Indonesia is spelling out that it will only respect the fiction of Portuguese rule over East Timor if Portugal follows orders from the Indonesian generals. If Portugal does not co-operate there will come either direct invasion or guerilla warfare from bases in Indonesia.

The FRETILIN leaders will be lucky if the umbrella of “Portuguese sovereignty” protects their government in East Timor for more than another week. Already they are realising that they have

wasted more than a month in talks with Portugal's Dr Santos and in desperation have appealed first to the Pope, then to the Indonesian army, to protect their borders. These appeals are confessions of complete bankruptcy.

So long as FRETILIN claims only to be a political party, so long as it fails to declare East Timor independent, so long as it fails to announce itself as the first national government of the world's newest nation, so long will Indonesia be able to maintain the fiction that there are three political parties, not one government in East Timor which should all be consulted in negotiations, and that the absence of effective Portuguese rule means there is no effective government so that there must be "international intervention to restore order", spearheaded by Indonesian paratroops. FRETILIN's refusal to act as the effective government of Indonesia, is playing into Indonesia's hands.

FRETILIN's refusal to declare East Timor independent is appeasement of Indonesia. Indonesia cannot be defeated by appeasement. No one will fight for a country too cowardly to declare itself independent. So long as East Timor disclaims independence, no country can be expected to respect its borders. East Timor must declare itself immediately an independent sovereign state with FRETILIN as its government. Otherwise, the Indonesians will be convinced the FRETILIN leaders are too timid to take any firm or decisive action, and so prepare to invade. Also the supporters of FRETILIN in East Timor hoping to be freed from colonial rule for the first time in four hundred years, will be politically demoralised by the vacillation of a leadership nationalist in words but in practice "the messenger boy of rival imperialisms. A politically demoralised population cannot sustain a protracted guerilla war.

The last leaflet issued by the Committee for Solidarity with the Revolution in East Timor warned that a defeated UDT would call in Indonesia as the last hope of East Timor's discredited and demoralised elite. This warning has now been confirmed. UDT is now abjectly pro-Indonesian. We wrote, without knowing much of FRETILIN's internal politics, that a left in FRETILIN must split from the existing FRETILIN leadership, and break with nationalism, if a workers and peasants government was to be formed which could achieve the stated goal of FRETILIN independence for East Timor. It now appears that FRETILIN's suicidal orientation toward Portugal has been the work largely of the former sergeants and NCO's of the former Portuguese Army in Dili who went over to FRETILIN in the fighting to overthrow UDT. Their leader is Rogerio Licibato now the general of the FRETILIN once a sergeant. Elements of the central committee of FRETILIN have been much more opposed to Portuguese rule. Here are the elements of a split, though they are as yet undeveloped, and it is too early to estimate how strong, or how principled, the left grouping is. We warn the left there is not much time left to act if East Timor is to be free. Piety about old leaders or new generals is misplaced when the revolution is in danger.

It is due to our last leaflet alone that one Australian "revolutionary" organisation the Socialist Labor League, has made one of its usual sudden, cynical 90-degree turns from uncritical support of FRETILIN to criticism of it for subservience to Portuguese colonialism, It is the first "left" organisation to make this stand. Since our last leaflet, both the Socialist Workers League and the Spartacist League have made statements on Timor, but both follow the Australian Communist Party in failing to condemn FRETILIN's willingness to tolerate Portuguese rule until elections in October 1976.

East Timor, in the most rudimentary stages of formation as a nation, finds its first struggles toward national independence already overshadowed by social revolution. The split between UDT and

FRETILIN was, however much FRETILIN claims plaintively to the imperialists its innocence of communism or even radicalism, motivated on UDT's part by a fear of the plantation workers and the village poor whose faith, staked in FRETILIN, seemed to menace businessmen who had grown fat on Portuguese handouts. However limited the social outlook of FRETILIN's leadership, the internationalisation of East Timor's agony forces one party further to the left, toward communism, another to the right, moving from Salazar to Suharto. The leaders of FRETILIN, however strongly they repudiate their past as labor leaders and denounce Marxism, find the past will not let them go, that the Indonesian generals hold them to it. While one nationalist leadership whose betrayal of the workers enabled it to betray East Timor each day, weighs less in the scales of history, history is creating the preconditions for a new Marxist leadership which will accept the role for which events have cast the left, and will lead the working class who will in turn lead East Timor to independence. There can be no progressive role for nationalism in East Timor: divided on class lines, neither nationalist grouping can, even in a revolutionary situation, carry through a determined struggle for national independence. The East Timor workers, can play a social role far out of proportion to their numbers when the bourgeoisie is bankrupt. The present petty bourgeois leaders of FRETILIN will grow more, not less, cowardly, as invasion draws nearer: they represent a class deserted by the movement of history. East Timor must now bypass nationalism to mount the first step on the ladder of social revolution.

The Socialist Labor League envisages FRETILIN which it calls a petty bourgeois nationalist organisation, smashing the old capitalist state apparatus and establish a workers' state (SLL ignores the peasants, the bulk of the Timorese population). A nationalist organisation cannot, of course, smash the state apparatus without a prior split between left and right and a firm rejection by the left of nationalism for Marxism. SLL is phrasemongering to try to protect itself from criticism from the left. At the same time, SLL offers FRETILIN "unconditional support" against the counter-revolution, even though it knows that to defeat the counter-revolution the state apparatus must be smashed and a party tied to Portuguese colonialism cannot and will not smash that apparatus. What is one to make of this absurd and contradictory chantage masquerading as Marxist analysis?

The conditions exist for a dissolution of the standing army, one vital part of the old state apparatus in Timor, but FRETILIN has subordinated an armed people to the officers of the old standing army. The police as an agency of the state, having supported UDT, have been abolished. The main strength of the state apparatus remains the administrators who have transferred their bureaucratism from the service of colonialism to the service of FRETILIN. These certainly represent the core of the right wing in FRETILIN and it is with these people that the workers must break. But SLL is incapable of making even this obvious empirical analysis of the possibilities of building a revolutionary party. It merely sloganises and blusters.

SLL demands, in Australia, that the Whitlam Government recognise "FRETILIN". It is of course both diplomatically and logically impossible to recognise a political party which refuses to take power or a nation which refuses to become independent. SLL attacks FRETILIN, for not smashing the state apparatus — a communist, not a nationalist aim — but fails to call for the proclamation of an independent Timor — the least one can expect of a "nationalist" movement. Then it expects the imperialist Labor Government to recognise a nationalist movement which has independence in its grasp but will not seize it. This is not politics, this is cheap demagoguery.

The demand in any case that should be made is primarily that Australia cease to support an imperialist government. It creates only illusions to believe that existing Cabinet, the existing Foreign Affairs Department and the existing ruling class can take a single action that is not motivated by imperialism. The same hands that guided Australia into Vietnam now lead it into the Timor morass. Nothing less than the destruction of Australian imperialism — itself a mirror-image of stronger nations' imperialisms — will end the present succession of genocidal wars in Asia. This requires the building of a revolutionary party to smash Australian and world imperialism. While building such a party, until its success, we demand of Australian imperialism only one thing: that it do nothing. In Timor, Australia must keep out. If it recognised FRETILIN tomorrow, it would be to try to put diplomatic pressure on it to succumb to Indonesia.

In the interval, which will be short, remaining to us before Indonesian invasion, Australian workers must act. Black bans must be placed on Indonesia before she invades to deter invasion, not after, when it may be too late. The Committee for Independent (read "Portuguese") East Timor is sending motor mechanics to FRETILIN: it should be sending arms. Politics are needed as well as arms, both to prepare Australian workers and to fight for the extension of the Timorese revolution: help circulate this leaflet widely and build support for the Committee for Solidarity with the East Timor Revolution

- MILITARY SUPPORT FOR FRETILIN AGAINST INDONESIAN IMPERIALISM AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION
- A WORKERS AND PEASANTS GOVERNMENT TO KEEP EAST TIMOR FREE
- AUSTRALIAN, INDONESIAN, NIUGINI, MALAYSIAN WORKERS AND PEASANTS — MAKE THE EAST TIMOR REVOLUTION INTERNATIONAL.