

## Review: Indonesia

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by Richard W. Franke

While the major media in the U.S. remained fixated on "boat people," Thai-Kampuchean border camps, and the like, they paid little attention to the atrocities and intrigues by the pro-US military government in Indonesia in its attempt to suppress independence movements and to stifle the economic and social potential of several peoples in the Eastern Archipelago. A series of recent publications, however, have made available much information and analysis—some of it previously known but in less accessible form, others entirely new.

Willard Hanna's *Indonesian Banda* is a short and microcosmic history of one group of the spice islands. Theoretically, the study leaves much to be desired. After announcing in his forward that he has chosen the small nutmeg islands in order to gain a simpler but more accurate perspective on the otherwise overly complex Indonesian society as a whole, the author never returns to explain just how the material in the remainder of the book relates to this goal. Indeed, Hanna's descriptive material, which summarizes much Dutch archival data not easily available to the non-Indonesia specialist, seems more appropriately attuned to a study of *colonialism* in microcosm: the broken treaties, the intrigues, the Dutch-English-Portuguese rivalries, the genocide, the fabulous profits in the home country and the impoverished workers in the nutmeg groves. Hanna also documents the extreme irrationality of colonial relationships. In one instance the Dutch actually exterminate the entire nutmeg tree population of one island to prevent its fruits from being gathered by the British.

Hanna's account is highly readable, sometimes shocking in its portrayal of the actions and mentality of the early colonial traders and conquerors. It adequately introduces the reader to the squandering of human and environmental resources that went into building the empire of the Dutch East Indies. The author's conservative political leanings come through in a few places such as when he sounds a hopeful note for the future of the now impoverished islanders with the demise of Sukarno and the rise of the more development-minded Suharto government. And, rather inconsistently, he comments towards the end of the study that while Banda in the 16th century was evidently relatively well-off, "The present population of 15,000 [though the same as in the 16th century] is clearly excessive." (p. 144) What a sad comment on the effects of 400 years of European control and thirty years of neocolonial independence!

Kees Lagerberg's study of the island of New Guinea "was commissioned and written to inform the world, as fully as

INDONESIAN BANDA: COLONIALISM AND ITS AFTERMATH IN THE NUTMEG ISLANDS by Willard A. Hanna. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978, 159 pp., maps, index.

WEST IRIAN AND JAKARTA IMPERIALISM by Kees Lagerberg. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979. 159 pp., photographs, index.

"PAPUA NEW GUINEA: INDONESIA'S NEXT DOMINO?" by Nonie Sharp. Reprinted from *Arena*, No. 52, 1979, pp. 1-13 (photocopy available on request from: Tapol-USA, P.O. Box 609, Montclair, N.J. 07042).

EAST TIMOR, INDONESIA, AND THE WESTERN DEMOCRACIES: A COLLECTION OF DOCUMENTS, edited by Torben Retboll. Copenhagen: International Workgroup for Indigenous Affairs, Document No. 40, 1980. (Address: IWGIA, Fiolstraede 10, DK-1171 Copenhagen K, Denmark.) 128 pp. Spanish summary, maps, photographs.

AN ACT OF GENOCIDE: INDONESIA'S INVASION OF EAST TIMOR by Arnold Kohen and John Taylor. Tapol-UK, 1979. 133 pp., maps, photographs. Foreword by Noam Chomsky. (Available in the US for \$4.50 incl. postage from: Tapol-USA, P.O. Box 609, Montclair, N.J. 07042.)

possible, of a very great modern injustice to which no fair solution is yet in sight." But we are neither told by whom the study was commissioned, nor why the author cannot come up with a "fair" solution for the Irianese who are now fighting a protracted guerrilla war for independence under the leadership of the OPM or "Free Papua Movement." Lagerberg, a former district officer from the period of Dutch "enlightened" colonial control of the 1950s is currently a professor of anthropology at the Catholic University of Tilburg, The Netherlands. Unfortunately, however, little anthropological knowledge is transmitted in the book. It is mostly a history of the diplomatic machinations leading to the transfer of sovereignty from The Netherlands to the United Nations in 1962—but under *Indonesian* administration—and the "act of free choice" of 1969 in which a small number of Papuan representatives were coerced into joining the Indonesian Republic on behalf of a resentful population. Lagerberg sees much of what happened from the narrow perspective of an embittered Dutch official, and constantly heaps vituperation upon former Indonesian President Sukarno. Numerous other ad hominem remarks lead one to be rather cautious in recommending Lagerberg's factual material—but much of it is rather useful if read in conjunction with the more informative and Papuan-oriented *Rule of the Sword* by Nonie Sharp (reviewed in *BCAS*, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 24). In a few places Lagerberg brings to readers some important material on the political intrigues that sealed the Indonesian takeover. On April

2, 1962, for example, then-President John F. Kennedy apparently sent a secret letter to the Dutch Prime Minister De Quay in which Kennedy spelled out why the US was *not* going to allow a Dutch-sponsored decolonization program to continue. The reason: a conflict would arise between Indonesia and The Netherlands, and, quoting from Kennedy's letter, "Such a conflict would have adverse consequences out of all proportions to the issue [Papuan independence—RF] at stake . . . Only the Communists would benefit from such a conflict . . . The whole non-Communist position in Vietnam, Thailand, and Malaya would be in grave peril and as you know these are areas in which we in the United States have heavy commitments and burdens." (p. 87) Like the East Timorese 13 years later, then, the national rights of the Irianese had to be sacrificed to the geopolitical interests of the United States. And like Portugal today, The Netherlands found itself unable to influence the policies of its dominant NATO partner.

The Irianese, however, have continued to resist Indonesian occupation with its corruption and brutality. Nonie Sharp's brief account in *Arena* makes available information on an apparent plan by the Indonesian military regime to extend its control from West Irian to the newly-independent state of Papua-New Guinea—the eastern half of the island. Both the continued occupation of portions of East Timor, and the threat to swallow up the eastern half of New Guinea represent policies never anticipated in the earlier take-over of west New Guinea which was justified on grounds that it was included in the previous colonial boundaries of the Dutch East Indies.

Torben Retboll has brought the valuable documentation service of the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) to the East Timor question. The collection of documents includes the 1978 and 1979 UN statements by Noam Chomsky (much of which is contained in a BCAS article in vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 40-68), statements by FRETILIN (the Timorese liberation movement), accounts from refugees in Portugal, letters smuggled out of Timor, and many other sources, several of them from West European and Australian newspaper accounts that were not given space in the US press. Many of the UN resolutions and the voting records of selected countries on these resolutions are also presented. The collection ends with a useful bibliography and list of addresses in various countries where further information can be obtained.

Kohen and Taylor's *An Act of Genocide* is the most definitive description yet of the Indonesian attempt to suppress the independence movement of the East Timorese. A "measured and carefully documented analysis," as Chomsky states in his forward to the book, *An Act of Genocide* is documented entirely from Western news sources or from reliable refugee accounts for the most recent period. After summarizing the history of East Timor, the authors describe the events leading to the Indonesian invasion of 1975, the exceptionally strong FRETILIN resistance up to 1977 and the eventual use of massive bombing to destroy crops and villages and to force a large portion of the population into camps where they must live on international relief. Two concluding chapters sum up the overall relationship between the Western nations and East Timor: in one chapter there is a list of the various economic and military

assistance programs of the United States, Australia, West Germany, The Netherlands, and Britain to the Indonesians, including specific counterinsurgency weapons. And finally, there is a chapter outlining the "Right to Self Determination" which the evidence so clearly shows has been willfully denied thus far to the people of East Timor. A stalemate has developed between Indonesian brutality and military occupation on the one hand and the commitment of the people of East Timor to gain their independence on the other. The addition of massive Western armaments to the Indonesian military has made that stalemate deadly as somewhere between 1/10 and 1/3 of the entire population of East Timor have been killed; the rest suffer massive dislocation.

## Books to Review

*The following review copies have arrived at the office of the Bulletin. If you are interested in reading and reviewing one or more of them, write to Bryant Avery, BCAS, P.O. Box W, Charlemont, MA 01339. This is not, of course, an exhaustive list of the available books in print—only a list of books received. We welcome reviews of other worthy volumes.*

- R.R. Ramchandani: *India and Africa* (Humanities Press, 1980).  
 Kampuchea Conference: *Documents from the Kampuchea Conference*, Stockholm, November, 1979.  
 Chr. L.M. Penders (ed.): *Indonesia: Selected Documents on Colonialism and Nationalism, 1830-1942* (Univ. of Queensland, 1977).  
 Michel Bruneau: *Recherches sur l'Organisation de l'Espace dans le Nord de la Thaïlande*, volume 1 and 2 (Paris, 1980).  
 G. Raymond Nunn: *Asia, Reference Works: A Select Annotated Guide* (Mansell, 1980).  
 Fedor Burlatsky: *Mao Tse-tung, An Ideological and Psychological Portrait* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976, 1980).  
 Raymond F. Wylie: *The Emergence of Maoism, 1935-1945* (Stanford, 1980).  
 Thomas A. Breslin: *China, American Catholicism, and the Missionary* (Penn State, 1980).  
 Stephen Endicott: *James G. Endicott: Rebel Out of China* (Toronto: 1980)  
 Richard Wich: *Sino-Soviet Crisis Politics*.  
 Ivan Kovalenko: *Soviet Policy for Asian Peace and Security* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976, 1980).  
 Eugene Cooper: *The Wood-Carvers of Hong Kong* (Cambridge Univ., 1980).  
 Kenneth Lieberthal: *Revolution & Tradition in Tientsin, 1949-52* (Stanford, 1980).  
 Hok-lam Chan: *Li Chih (1527-1602) in Contemporary Chinese Historiography* (M.E. Sharpe, 1980).  
 Marc Blecher and G. White: *Micropolitics in Contemporary China: A Technical Unit during and after the Cultural Revolution* (M.E. Sharpe, 1980).  
 Ts'ao Yu (trans. by Rand and Lau): *The Wilderness* (Indiana, 1980).  
 V.I. Semanov: *Lu Hsun and His Predecessors* (M.E. Sharpe, 1980).  
 George Kao (ed.): *Two Writers and the Cultural Revolution: Lao She and Chen Jo-hsi* (Univ. of Washington Press, 1980).  
 Bernier, Chang, Ricketts: *Le Japon: Problemes economiques et sociaux de l'apres-guerre* (Montreal: Centre d'etudes de l'Asie de L'Est, 1980).  
 Nakano Shigeharu (trans. by Brett deBary): *Three Works* (Cornell, 1979).  
 Roger W. Bowen: *Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan* (California, 1980).  
 Kazuo Sato (ed.): *Industry and Business in Japan* (M.E. Sharpe, 1980).  
 Diane Tasca (ed.): *U.S.-Japanese Economic Relations* (Pergamon, 1980).  
 Kim Chi Ha: *The Middle Hour: Selected Poems* (Coleman Enterprises, 1980).  
 Chong Lim Kim: *Political Participation in Korea: Democracy, Mobilization and Stability* (ABC-Clio, 1980).  
 John Girling: *America and the Third World: Revolution and Intervention* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).