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Date: Mon, 18 Dec 2000 01:39:08 -0800
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International Action for West Papua (IAWP)
<http://www.koteka.net/>

PGP Key available on request

"A careless whisper can cost many lives"

Why West Papua is paying for East Timor
Melbourne Age Sun Dec 17 19:42:55 UTC 2000

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/2000/12/17/FFXNCCZKTGC.html>

By ROBERT WOLFGRAMM
Sunday 17 December 2000

The Australian stance is hardly surprising, based as it is on the convenience of security and on economic priorities. For Australia and Indonesia, it is as you were; for the rest of the Pacific, it is as we expect.

Foreign policy is rarely based on moral principle and Downer proves that, like his predecessors, he is imprisoned by history and necessity.

What will disappoint the Melanesian Pacific even more is that, in taking this line on Jakarta's claims over an alien people, the Australian Government seems to have learnt nothing from its 25-year East Timor policy debacle.

What right does Indonesia have to West Papua? Is it ethnic or racial? Cultural or linguistic? Is it a religious or historical congruence? It is none of these.

The peoples of Indonesia are distinct from the peoples of Papua. They have no grounds, no right, to sovereignty over Papua and its resources. West Papua is theirs by historic conquest alone a conquest derived from the accident of proximity and occasioned by opportunism because of the collapse of regional European colonialism.

On this illegitimate basis, Indonesia's annexation of West Papua is being allowed to stand unchallenged by the only power and close neighbor

in the region that could possibly help right the wrong.

Strategists in Jakarta must be laughing. Having been on the back foot for the past 25 years because of global condemnation of their seizure of East Timor, they have now successfully gambled away an economic pawn for a knight in shining armor. Because that is what the resource-rich West Papuan piece is for Indonesia's precarious economic future.

Australian policy makers cannot have been fooled by Indonesian reticence and delay in handing East Timor over to its own people. They surely saw what was coming. Jakarta's prolonged bluff on East Timor effectively masked its intended campaign for the West Papuan prize.

If Australia was not play-acting with Indonesia in the theatre that was East Timor's struggle for liberation, then it has lost an opportunity to interpose a moral alternative in dealing with what was, on the face of it, a weakened power. In relation to West Papua, some guidelines for autonomy and a timetable to independence could have been laid before the Indonesians.

Instead, while we've been basking in the success of our achievements in Dili, the Indonesian tiger has been waiting for its real victim in Jayapura.

Both Australia and Indonesia have something to gain by their revived rapprochement, but they would be mistaken if they thought the indigenous Papuan fighting spirit was anything less than that of the Timorese.

West Papua is an orphan child, disinherited by its European parent and harnessed into servitude by a regional one. It is banging on the door of Australia, pleading for assistance as it heads toward liberation and maturation. By complying with Indonesian wishes, Alexander Downer's foreign policy is trying to turn them away.

What a nice Christmas present for those burying the first martyrs of the Morning Star. What wishful thinking on the part of Downer.

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