

INDONESIA : THE WAR PLOT

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IN February *Labour Monthly* published an article dealing with the crisis that had arisen over the refusal of the Dutch to return West Irian to Indonesia. It was pointed out that behind a spate of the usual propaganda about 'Communist intrigue' a very real plot was being organised, with the help of the U.S. State Department, to stage a revolt in Sumatra to bring about the downfall of the Central Government in Indonesia.

On February 11 the U.S. Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, rushed in to declare that the constitutionally established Indonesian Government in Djakarta was 'unconstitutional'; and that the U.S. would like to see in Indonesia a Government 'which reflects the real interests and desires of the people'. Four days later, on February 15, rebels in Sumatra announced the setting up of a new 'government' aimed at the overthrow of the Central Government.

Making the American position even more open, warships of the U.S. Seventh Fleet moved into position off the east coast of Central Sumatra on March 11, claiming to be doing this in order to evacuate American citizens from the island. (The evacuation of nationals is always a convenient excuse for imperialist interference.)

On March 12 the SEATO meeting in Manila held a closed session on Indonesia. On March 13 Dulles announced that the U.S. was considering giving recognition to the rebel 'government'. He added that such a decision 'depended on whether the movement had gained sufficient momentum and stability to have recognition granted'. (It will not be lost on any reader how quick this twentieth century Metternich is to rush in with talk about recognising a spurious 'government' which has only lasted a few weeks and has obviously no popular support; while at the same time the U.S. Government consistently refused to recognise the Government of People's China, which has nearly ten years of stability behind it and is clearly backed by the overwhelming majority of the 600 million inhabitants of China.) On March 14, the Indonesian Prime Minister, Djuanda, confirmed the report that American arms had been dropped to rebel forces by aircraft with Australian markings. Though denying that it was involved, the U.S. Government had to admit, according to Reuter and Associated Press reports on March 14, that 'it did not rule out the possibility . . . that arms and ammu-

nition declared surplus to U.S. needs could have been picked up on the open market'. They can tell that one to the marines!

This brief diary is a confirmation of the plot organised by the American rulers to overthrow the democratic government of the Indonesian Republic; and, in view of the open use being made of Singapore by the rebels, the British Government is implicated.

The Western Powers hope that by playing on certain local feeling in Sumatra and making use of a handful of discredited officers, religious fanatics, corrupt bankers and other social misfits, they can bring pressure to bear on the Indonesian Government; secure the installation of their pet Hatta as Prime Minister; divide the national forces by means of anti-communist baiting and repression; and so weaken the Republic and make possible the continued exploitation of Indonesian wealth by Western monopolies. Sumatra has been chosen as the base for this attempt because of its immense natural wealth, including oil, its strategic proximity to Singapore, its sparse population (under ten million compared with sixty million in Java), and its relatively less advanced political movement.

So far the plot has largely misfired. The Indonesian people, instead of being thrown into confusion by the revolt, have stood firm; and the Government has taken commendably quick and decisive steps to crush the revolt, instead of doing what the imperialists had hoped—carry on protracted negotiations with the rebels. Hatta's attempt to push President Sukarno off his anti-imperialist path has failed. He has not yet openly committed himself to the rebel government, obviously preferring to bide his time.

The military successes already scored by the Indonesian Central Government and the firmness of its stand are a good omen. But the struggle is not yet over, for the rebels do not stand alone. They have powerful backers in the West. *The Times* on March 15 even went so far as to offer them advice:

The rebels' main advantage lies in the money they have amassed by trading with and through Singapore. . . . If the struggle develops into an economic test of endurance, which in some ways might be the best strategy for the rebels, the focus would shift to the Strait of Malacca, where the shipping connection with Singapore constitutes Central Sumatra's lifeline.

(Incidentally, the practices of the 'main advantage' referred to are illegal; and were already being practised even before the rebel 'government' had been set up.)

But if the rebels have allies, the allies of the Indonesian people are far stronger. And it would be as well if Dulles and all those who think like him were to remember this.