

East Timor, in particular the independence ballot of 1999. His first book, *A Dirty Little War*, was the best to come out about that period, and he drew heavily on his extensive personal experience and inside knowledge, placed against a factual background. *Indonesia's Secret War* employs a similar technique and is as successful in this as his first book. In large part, Martinkus relies again on simply being there and being able to convey his raw experiences. He enjoys a gift for clear and simple expression. In particular, Martinkus conveys a very real sense of his own occasional fear, as anyone in such a situation must experience. But he plays this lightly. He does not labour us with the shocked sense that one has of travelling in a dangerous place, without sleep, nerves shot, even though he could have done so; the tone remains measured.

Martinkus also has a sense of detail and it is his talking to the Acehnese who live with the daily experience of conflict, death and fear that creates such a complete picture.

Based on my own experience of Aceh, Martinkus's writing is equal to or more accurate than anything I have read to date. In this, it is a suitable antidote to much of the confusion and apologetics that passes for

informed commentary on the place.

There is no doubt that Martinkus's persistence reflects a quiet, if steadfast bravery. Going back into Aceh, knowing one is banned and that a similarly adventurous colleague (Billy Nessen) was at that time running for his life in the jungle, requires courage. Martinkus does go back though, in part because he knows it is a good story in conventional media terms, even if it has been little covered in Australia and the West generally. Official Indonesian cover-up, restrictions on the media and Western complicity are importantly all detailed here. Through such parallels, Martinkus invokes the memory of East Timor and the US experience in Vietnam.

More than for just a 'good story', Martinkus goes back because he sees a terrible wrong being committed and, in the best tradition of journalism, believes that only greater public awareness can alter this course of events. Martinkus treads a path that many contemporary journalists, looking back on the work of their lives, will regret they had not followed.

Damien Kingsbury is a Senior Lecturer in International Development at Deakin University.

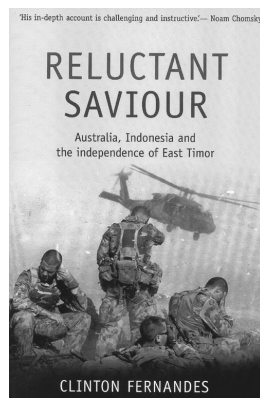
Canberra's Crimes in East Timor: a prosecution from below

MAX LANE

Clinton Fernandes: *Reluctant Saviour: Australia, Indonesia and the independence of East Timor* (Scribe, \$22).

Scribe Publications is to be commended for publishing its series of short books which provide the opportunity for a writer to present a complete argument for a point of view in a form where we are all encouraged to read from beginning to end in one go. Clinton Fernandes is to be commended for making use of this opportunity in such an effective way. Fernandes' effectiveness is not just a result of his concise and accessible writing but of his analytic approach to Australian foreign policy in relation to East Timor.

When talking about relations between Australia and Indonesia Fernandes recognises that there are both two Australias and two Indonesias. His brief



exposition of Indonesian history, the coming to power of Suharto's dictatorial New Order and its relationship with the Australian government and the Jakarta lobby demythologises the whole idea of 'national interest'. It also demythologises the idea that the Jakarta lobby—officials, academics and journalists who have fought for close relations with the New Order government and its Armed Forces—is some kind of traitorous grouping betraying the 'national interest'. Fernandes argues that this 'lobby' was also defending the 'national interest' but the national interest of their Australia—of big capital and bureaucratic elites—and not the 'national interest' of us.

Fernandes draws out this picture in his first chapter but comes back to this basic framework in

Chapters Four and Five when he deals with the role of mobilised public opinion in determining foreign policy. The essence of his argument is that mobilised public opinion in the first weeks of September, 1999, “forced [the Australian government] to turn against an ally [Jakarta] it had supported even after the victory of the independence forces had been announced” in August 1999. Chapter Four, where this history is presented, follows a devastating prosecution of Howard’s and Downer’s support for its Indonesian ally in Chapter Three.

Fernandes destroys a myth that has been propagated by both the Howard Government and some on the left. This is that the Howard Government had always planned the military intervention in East Timor. Howard and Downer like to claim that they are responsible for the liberation of East Timor. Some on the left argue that the arrival of Australian troops in East Timor was always a part of a planned Australian takeover of East Timor: the same view held by the ultra-right elements in the Indonesian elite.

Fernandes provides a blow by blow account of the activities of Prime Minister Howard and Foreign Minister Downer during 1998 and 1999. This evidence could only result in any jury coming to an unanimous verdict of guilty to charges that the Howard and Downer policy was aimed at supporting and covering up for the Indonesian Armed Forces, even after the East Timorese people had voted for independence. Fernandes backs this up with more data showing what military preparations were actually underway in Australia prior to the 1999 decision to intervene on behalf of East Timor: namely, prepara-

tions to evacuate foreign witnesses of the militias’ and the Indonesian Armed Forces’ violence. Again the analytical key is the recognition of the existence of two Australias and two Indonesias.

In his final chapter, Fernandes discusses how the ‘us’ in Australia can continue to play a role. Australian activists can initiate in Australia “citizen-initiated arrests, prosecutions [of visiting officials] and civil suits” against Indonesian military officials guilty of war crimes. They can campaign for the cancellation of the foreign debt that cripples the Indonesian economy. Fernandes also calls for an end to all contact with the Indonesian Armed Forces while they remain a tool of repression.

The argument is clear and the evidence presented in this short book is abundant. Everybody should equip themselves with this evidence today and use it to counter the attempts of Howard and Downer to claim responsibility for a policy that they in fact fought to avoid. Their claim to have liberated East Timor is an insult to the long struggle of the East Timorese people, the Indonesian democrats who succeeded in overthrowing Suharto and the Australian people who mobilised in September 1999.

I wait for Fernandes’ full study of this history and hope he turns to examine the specific issues of Australia’s ongoing relationship with East Timor: Timor Sea oil and gas, economic development aid, war reparations, and visa, travel and work access to Australia.

Max Lane is a Research Fellow at the Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University.

The War against Iraq: then and now

CLINTON FERNANDES

Andrew Wilkie: *Axis of Deceit* (Black Inc., \$29.95)

John Martinkus: *Travels in American Iraq* (Black Inc., \$24.95)

Over the past few years, Andrew Wilkie has been on a steep political learning curve. He has written an informative but highly contradictory book that reflects his political trajectory, itself very much a work in progress.

As most readers of *Overland* will know, Wilkie is a former Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Australian

Infantry Corps who was employed as an intelligence analyst in the Office of National Assessments. He resigned from the ONA on 11 March 2003, days before the start of the ground war against Iraq. The Director-General of ONA and other servants of state power immediately claimed that Wilkie knew very little about Iraq or terrorism, and was therefore not well placed to comment authoritatively on either subject. Accordingly, Wilkie refutes their claims by going into details of centrifugal tubes, radiological