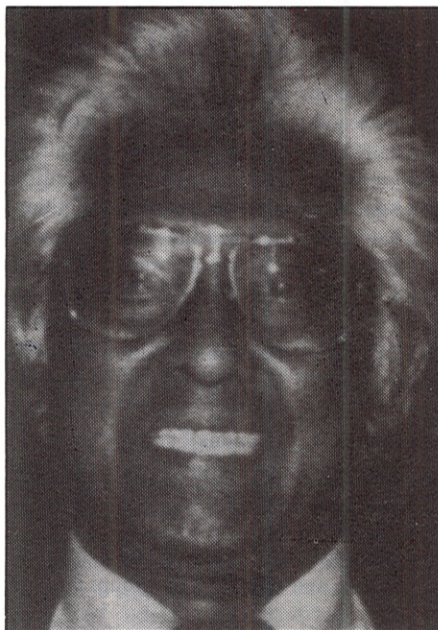
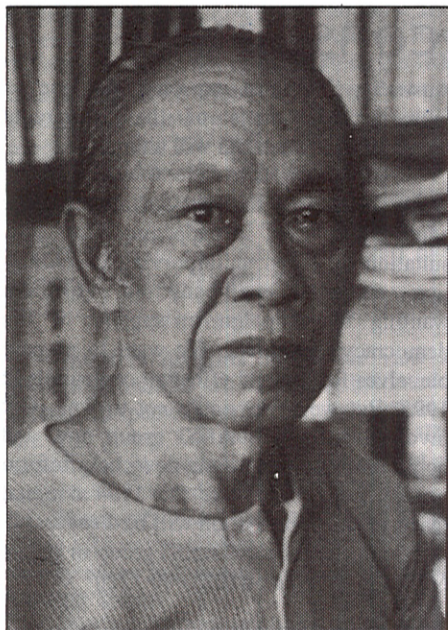


SUARA AKSI

Indonesia Solidarity Action

\$2.00



Pramoedya Ananta Toer (left) and Adnan Buyung Nasution (right) two of those who have welcomed the formation of the PRD.

New group emerges - Peoples Democratic Union

Present at the launch of the new activist based democratic organisation, the Peoples Democratic Union (PRD - Persatuan Rakyat Demokratik), were Adnan Buyung Nasution, Director, of the Indonesian Legal Aid Institute (YLBHI) Bang Buyung, as he is known, emphasised the necessity of strong organisation and leadership in any movement. Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Indonesia's foremost novelist, also welcomed the formation of the new group hailing today's youth as braver than his generation as they were prepared to face an armed foe themselves unarmed.

Other figures present included Mohtar Pakpahan, head of the SBSI (Indonesian Trade Union for Prosperity), Dede Triawan from the environmental organisation WAHLI, and Mulyana Kusuma, from YLBHI.

Sugeng Bahagijo, Chairperson of the PRD, declared PRD's task as to fight for the restoration of democratic rights and freedoms. At the PRD launch at the offices of YLBHI, over 100 people cheered on Sugeng and other PRD activists as they read the founding declaration. The PRD welcomed "everybody as members, farmers, workers, students, intellectuals and others, as long as they are concerned about the development of democracy in Indonesia," said Sugeng.

Since the launch on May 2, the Indonesian regime has threatened it with "sanctions" should the PRD engage in any political activities. However the PRD has told *Suara AKSI* that it is receiving many offers of assistance and requests to join.

See this issues special feature, pages 5-8.

"Justice system rotten," says Yeni Damayanti after court victory for FAMI students (page 9)

May 94 page 1

Indonesian cultural action tour

In January 1995, Australia-Indonesia Cultural Action will be organising a ten day cultural action workshop in Indonesia. The ten day programme will include theatre workshops where participants, through cultural action techniques, learn about the social and political struggles on Indonesian workers, peasants and students. The workshops will be organised by some of Indonesia's most dynamic popular theatre groups based in Central Java.

It is planned that there will also be workshops on art and painting lead by some of Indonesia's foremost activist artists.

Participants will also visit worker and farmer communities and have the chance to dialogue with them about their conditions and their efforts to change those conditions.

If you are interested in finding out more, including dates and cost, please write to Australia-Indonesia Cultural Action, PO Box 458, Broadway, NSW 2007, Australia.

AKSI national consultation

AKSI plans to hold a national consultation and teach-in this year in Sydney on December 10-11. The teach-in will concentrate on promoting discussion and understanding of the growing unrest and increasing initiatives by the activist based Indonesian democracy movement. "The formation of the PRD is a major signal that activists determined to fight for democracy are starting to organise seriously," said Max Lane, "one of the conveners of AKSI in Sydney. Topics will include backgrounders on the new independent trade unions being established, the general national political situation, the situation of women, and the use of culture in social change.

Apart from speakers from Australian universities and from AKSI groups around

Australia, it is also expected that one or more representatives of the grass-roots movement in Indonesia will attend.

"The teach-in is in order to exchange information and so that we can all be better educated on what is happening. The consultation is aimed at improving co-ordination amongst everybody in Australia wanting to campaign in support of the democracy movement. We want to prepare ourselves for big and effective campaigns in 1995. But we urge people not to wait. Get involved with your AKSI group now and help build our campaigns now, help inform people, help make sure the 1994 national teach-in and consultation will be a success."

Contact your local AKSI group or phone Max, Jon or Arun on (02) 690 1220.

Activist visits Australia

An Indonesian activist recently spoke to AKSI meetings in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide where he reported on plans for the launch of new pro-democracy groups and on the increasing labour movement activism.

Nic, an activist with one of the popular theatre groups working with farmers and workers, reported workers would start consolidate in the near future.

In Melbourne he talked with the Overseas Service Bureau, the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) Human Rights Office and *Inside Indonesia* and attended discussions at Monash University. In Adelaide he also attended meetings with academics and students at Flinders University involved in the study of Indonesian language, culture and history. Importantly, he also held dialogues with the SA Trades and Labour Council International Committee and officials of the Media Alliance union. He

was a keynote speaker at the Media Alliance May Day celebrations.

Solidarity Fax

Nic stressed the need for increased international solidarity and support from Australia. "We need your support but we also understand that you therefore need to receive information quickly," he told a Sydney AKSI meeting. He went on to explain that the best way to do that was via fax but that the grass-roots groups needed outside financial help to buy a fax machine.

AKSI has therefore launched an appeal to raise \$1,200 for a fax machine. Nic has already received donations from Sydney AKSI and supporters in Adelaide. Please send cheques to AKSI, PO Box 458, Broadway, NSW 2007, Australia.



East Timor campaign round-up

East Timor

The Indonesian government has come under increasing pressure over the issue of East Timor following the release of John Pilger's film *Death of a Nation* and critical statements made by respected Indonesian academic George Aditjondro. International attention to the suppression of opposition on East Timor has seen the formation of new solidarity groups and growing activity world wide.

The Indonesian government is using all means available to down play the issue and divert attention from the situation on East Timor, which has not changed since the Dili massacre in 1991. There have been tours of foreign journalists to show the "economic" progress under the Indonesian administration. The Indonesian ambassador to the UN even made statements at the 4th round of negotiations in Geneva on May 6, signalling a willingness to hold discussions with East Timorese against integration.

Protests in Timor

Protesters detained during the visit of foreign journalists are still being held under arrest. Suspected resistance sympathizers are still being harassed and tortured. The military continues to monitor and control all activities of everyday life.

Statements like those made in Geneva lose all credence when compared with the reality of the Indonesian presence and policy on East Timor.

They are little more than a smokescreen and attempt to undermine the efforts of the East Timorese people and the international solidarity community.

Manila Conference

Indonesia has already made strong condemnation of the Philippines government for allowing the first regional Asia-Pacific Conference in support of East Timor, scheduled to take place in Manila at the end of May. An Indonesian embassy spokesperson in Manila said that "Holding a meeting that slurs the name of East Timor is an infringement of [Indonesian] sovereignty".

The Ramos government caved in to Indonesia and has banned several of the delegates from entry into the Philippines. MAKABAYAN, a new socialist mass organisation has denounced the Indonesian government's "diplomatic blackmail" and has organised a picket in front of the Indonesian embassy in protest. MAKABAYAN is part of the conference organising

committee

Jakarta has also expressed concern over recent criticism from New Zealand's Governor General and petition signed by more than half the country's MPs attacking Indonesian policy in East Timor. This followed the screening of *Death of a Nation* organised by Alliance leader Jim Anderton, who is also chair of Parliamentarians for East Timor.

Actions in Europe

Solidarity actions such as these have intensified internationally. In Britain there have been several protests organised by Tapol and other human rights groups against the sale of BAE Hawk warplanes to Indonesia. In North America, ETAN (East Timor Alert Network) has stepped up campaign activity with protest actions and lobbying of the US Congress to cease arms supply to Indonesia. In Europe there have been similar activities and the formation of new solidarity groups (In France, *Peuples Solidaires* and in Switzerland, *Urgence Pour l'Indépendance du Timor*)

Australian Campaigns

Campaign activity is also gearing up across Australia. There is the projection to build large demonstrations nationally on November 12, particularly given the increase in interest in East Timor and the success of other demonstrations this year against Australian foreign policy in the region. A demonstration against foreign minister Gareth Evans organised by AKSI, Australia East Timor Assoc.(AETA), Bougainville Freedom Movement and other groups attracted over 200 people.

In Perth, the renewed Friends of East Timor held a demonstration outside the SAS Commando base near Fremantle, where the elite Indonesian Kopassus regiment train. A double-decker bus with 200 protesters turned up on Palm Sunday, and hammered in several hundred white crosses, symbolising those killed in the Dili massacre.

They were also involved with the screening of *Death of a Nation* which attracted the attention of the Federal Police! Christine Faithful, spokesperson for the group told *Suara AKSI* that "An officer came to the cinema asking who was responsible for putting on the film and what people were going to be doing along with a barrage of other ridiculous questions"

Inside
Indonesia

For extended information
on Indonesia subscribe to
Inside Indonesia
Individuals \$18.00
PO Box 190
Northcote 3070



May 94 page 3

Australian support for Aditjondro, Soleiman

Letters of support from over 20 academics and human rights activists in Australia have been sent to outspoken critics of the Suharto regime, George Aditjondro and Nuku Soleiman. Both have made strong public statements over the brutal suppression of freedom under Suharto.

Nuku Soleiman was sentenced to four years in prison on February 24 for his involvement in a peaceful demonstration outside the National Parliament in Jakarta on November 25 1993. His show-trial and arrest has been used by the Indonesian authorities to intimidate other social justice groups and activists - such as academic George Aditjondro - from continuing to carry out open opposition. Soleiman at the time of his arrest was chairperson for Yayasan Pijar, an inde-

pendent human rights organisation.

Pressure has increased on Aditjondro as well, for his stance on freedom for East Timor and his support of organisations like Yayasan Pijar. Police and security officers attempted to disrupt a meeting in the Yayasan Pijar office on April 24, where more than 50 students and human rights activists had come to hear Aditjondro and Timorese student activist Virgillio da Silva Guterres (just released from prison).

It is believed the authorities will also attempt to stop Aditjondro from attending the first regional Asia Pacific conference in support of East Timor, scheduled to be held for the end of May in Manila. Letters of protest have been sent to the Philippines from the Indonesian government.

Indonesian Activists speak at International Green Left Conference

Two members from the Peoples Committee (Committee Rakyat), a workers, peasant and student organisation, were in Australia to speak at the International Green Left Conference, along with leaders from other parties and movements around the world. Hasan and Nic Johannes also spoke at other meetings organised by AKSI and the radical youth group Resistance while in Australia.

Hasan was a keynote speaker at the IGL Conference, featuring in the major plenary *Indonesia: the last days of Suharto?*, which took up the current political situation and the prospects for growth of the emerging pro-democracy formations within Indonesia.

In his speech, Hasan spoke of the oppression and fear in Indonesia which crippled the progressive and democratic movement for so many years following the bloody coup in 1965 led by Suharto. "After the coup, the peoples movement in Indonesia was always accused of being a PKI front or communist when they made demands for the people. Nobody will talk

about the people, nobody will talk about democracy. Kidnapping, harassment, torture and many kinds of oppression".

He went on to explain how the people regained their confidence, through the student protests in the early 1970s to the rural land disputes and renewed student activity of the late 1980s. "The consciousness of the people began to increase because they witnessed how the people mobilised to defend their lands and their rights. The people began to build the movement again in Indonesia. It was this radicalisation which also spurred the workers movement and brought issues such as the Marsinah case to national and international attention".

Johannes spoke at a workshop on the Third World debt and the problems associated with World Bank and IMF sponsored development programs. Many of these projects had created greater hardship for the people they were designed to help; destruction of the environment, forced migration, land seizures, unemployment and decline in the quality of life.



May 94 page 4

Subscribe to Suara AKSI
For \$15 per year
get six copies of Suara
AKSI mailed to your door.
Just mail the coupon to
Suara AKSI, PO Box 458,
Broadway, NSW 2007

Name.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Enclosed is a cheque/money order
for \$15 being one years subscription

Launch of the Peoples Democratic Union in Jakarta

Feature

JAKARTA- On May 2 around 100 students, workers and farmers crowded into the offices of the Jakarta Legal Aid Institute for the launch of Indonesia's first campaigning democratic organisation, the Peoples Democratic Union (PRD - Persatuan Rakyat Demokratik).

The PRD is based on a network of local student, worker or farmer groups based in the cities of Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Solo, Semarang, Surabaya in Java, Medan in Sumatra and Manado in Sulawesi. This is the first attempt to form these groups into an effective national organisation. The launch was used by the newly elected chairperson, Sugeng Bahagijo, to present the demands of the new organisation set out in a founding declaration.

Representatives of PRD especially emphasised the role of the workers' movement in the struggle for democracy. "A central pillar of the Indonesian democratic movement was the rise of the workers movement in the 1990s. It would be a mistake to struggle for democracy without the working class at the head of the struggle," one activist said. "The history of the international democratic movement shows that it is the workers movement that is the effective catalyst and safeguard for democracy."

PRD has made two particularly bold demands in the Indonesian context. Firstly, the declaration also calls for the restoration of civil rights to the tens of thousands of leftist and nationalist former political prisoners arrested for over ten years in 1965. These people still have lost their right to work in many areas, to write, to travel and must carry special ID cards. It has also taken a strong stand on East Timor calling for the peaceful resolution of the problem and no military intervention recognising the human rights and democratic rights of the East Timorese nation.

Those elected to the board of the new organisation are Sugeng Bahagijo (a philosophy student from Gajah Mada University, UGM) as General Chairperson; Secretary General Tumpak Sitorus (from the Institute of Science and Technology), Head of the Advocacy Department Juli Eko Nugroho (from the Islamic University of Indonesia, UII), Head of Research and Development Aris Arief Mundayat (a literature lecturer from UGM), Head of the Department for Organisational Development

and Cooperation Benu Hidayat (from Diponegoro University, Undip), Head of the Financial Department Amber (from the Economics faculty at UII), and Head of the Cultural Department, poet Wiji Thukul.

The founding of the PRD comes in the midst of a range of disturbing developments for the Suharto regime. Medan and Jakarta are still tense following six days of rioting by over 20,000 young workers in Medan who were demanding wage rises and the right to organise freely. This followed an earlier strike of 13,000 workers in Solo in February and more strikes have taken place in recent weeks in Central Java. Meanwhile ongoing revelations about the use of torture to force defendants in a murder trial to confess to the murder of a woman worker leader, Marsinah, which everyone believes was committed by the military continue to attract nationwide attention and criticism.

It is not surprising therefore that the regime's officials have responded quickly to the founding of PRD. The Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs Soesilo Soedarman, was quoted in Kompas as saying that if the PRD disobeys and continues to engage in political activity, the government will take a firm stance. "If PRD violates Law No 3/85, they will be subject to legal sanctions," he said. Director General of Social and Political Affairs of the Department of Social and Political Affairs, Sutoyo NK told journalists in Jakarta on May 3 that "Law Number 3/85 clearly sets out that political activities in this country are only allowed to be carried out through the three 'social-political organisations', namely the United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, PPP), Golkar, and the Indonesian Democratic Party (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia, PDI). Thus, if it is really the case that this new organisation, PRD, is active in the political field, this means it is breaking the law."

Sutoyo told journalists that before the government takes action, it will in the meantime study the situation to determine how far the formation of the new organisation really constitutes a "deviation". Soetoyo added that beyond the three "social-political organisations", the only other kind of organisations allowed are "ormas" (societal organisations). "Ormas can only give input, they may not become new political organisations. PRD is not allowed to engage in political activity, and it should not if it doesn't want to come up against the relevant [state] agency. So, [they] shouldn't play around in this matter," he was reported in Kompas.



May 94 page 5

Declaration of the Peoples' Democratic Union

(PRD - Persatuan Rakyat Demokratik)

- A. We believe that a humanistic development must be accompanied by the opportunity for citizens for political participation which must be possible through democratic political institutions.
 - B. We believe that there must be political renewal whereby the state is prepared to accommodate democratic demands;
 - C. We believe that the articulation of democratic aspirations at this point will help the political process in Indonesia develop more healthily and achieve greater maturity;
 - D. We believe that in order to achieve this progress all democratic groups need to co-operate in order to help complement and assist each other's efforts in these difficult tasks.
- So we who have now organised in the Peoples Democratic Union (PRD - Persatuan Rakyat Demokratik) recommend and put forward the following demands and invite all democratic groups to work together to fulfil them:

1. Democracy in Politics

1. Return to the people their right to organise and their right to unionise: the right to establish mass organisations and political parties beside those now allowed by the regime; that all parties have the freedom to carry out their activities at the national, provincial, district, as well as village level and in their workplaces, guaranteeing their rights to campaign freely, democratically and independently.
2. Return the right of the Indonesian people to think and hold opinions freely: including Freedom of the Press, the right to demonstrate, the right to hold public rallies, campaigns, strikes and other constitutional and democratic means of expressing their aspirations;
3. To hold elections based on the District System to directly elect people for the Presidency, the Legislature and Judiciary for a maximum of two terms. The elections must be free, fair and honest and all citizens must be able to participate;
4. To return supremacy to Civilians with a review of the concept of Dual Functions [for the Armed Forces] and of all aspects of the Security Approach.
5. To guarantee full ~~protection~~ under the law to all citizens in all civil and criminal cases holding high the concept of "innocent until proven guilty".
6. To return all civil rights to former political prisoners and current political prisoners as Indonesian citizens.
7. To guarantee Human Rights to all Indonesian Citizens based on universal applicability through an independent Human Rights Institution comprising elected members.
8. Support the peaceful resolution of the East Timor problem (without military intervention) recognising the human rights and democratic rights of the East Timorese nation.
9. To eliminate all forms of cultural, political and social discrimination based on religion and belief, race, ethnicity or regional origin.

2. Democracy in the Economy

1. To eliminate all forms of monopoly practices and collusion between businesses and the authorities; the elimination of all exploitative practices of the people by the conglomerates and giant capital and the distribution of these economic assets to cooperatives, and small and medium business.
2. The application of a progressive tax on the conglomerates.
3. All repayment of foreign debt and interest should be made from national revenues collected from the progressive tax and should not be financed by further foreign debt;
4. Protect the products of the peoples agriculture and ban imports of agricultural produce;
5. The elimination of manipulative practices in the name of the Peoples Plantation System through the redistribution of land to the people.

3. Democracy in Culture

1. provide free, democratic spirited and people oriented education for the poorer layers of society;
2. return creative freedom in the arts, in academic and intellectual endeavour in all its manifestations and return the right to democratic access to information.
3. eliminate discrimination against women
4. end all practices of enforcing cultural conformity by the dominant powers in society.

Jakarta, May 2, 1994

Return Democratic Rights! says new group

On 2 May over 80 activists - workers, students, farmers - from around Indonesia met at the offices of the Jakarta Legal Aid Institute (YLBHI) to announce that they had formed a new organisation to campaign for democratic change in Indonesia. The new organisation, headed by Sugeng Bahagijo and Tumpak Sitorus, is called Persatuan Rakyat Demokratik - PRD (Peoples Democratic Union). In its founding declaration, the PRD calls for a restoration of full democratic rights and freedoms, a return to civilian rule and redistribution of the wealth of society to the poor.

The declaration also goes much further than any previous pro-democracy group in Indonesia in that it publicly calls for the restoration of full civil rights to the tens of thousands former communist and nationalist political prisoners and also calls for a peaceful resolution in East Timor, without military intervention and recognising the human and democratic rights of the East Timorese nation. The full text of this initial statement is published in this *Suara AKSI*. It is expected that another manifesto for achieving social change in Indonesia will also soon be released by the PRD.

There have been several pro-democracy groups operating in Indonesia since the early 1980s. Amongst those still going these include the *Petition of 50*, a group comprising former leaders of traditional non-communist political parties, retired democratic minded military figures, intellectuals and former students activists. This group has been consistently issuing statements demanding some democratic reforms. In the 1980s they were harassed and some gaoled

on various trumped up charges. Another group was the **Forum Demokrasi**, a coalition of Moslem and secular liberal democrats who advocated democratic reform. A third group has been the students organised in the **Pijar Foundation** and the **Indonesian Students Action Front (FAMI)**. One Pijar member, Beathor Suryadi, recently came out of gaol after serving a four year sentence for distributing political leaflets. 21 students from FAMI are currently on trial for anti-government protests. And, of course, the **Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI)** has been a long term courtroom defender and public spokesperson for the defence of civil liberties.

PRD represents a new phenomenon. It has emerged not simply out of the social justice and democratic concerns of students, intellectuals, political figures and professionals but has emerged out of the activism of the social solidarity movements that has been growing since the mid 1980s. Young students and intellectuals who have been active in solidarity committees with workers and farmers in many areas have now joined together with some of those workers and farmers to launch what could be the embryo of a political party with a genuine, organised mass base.

AKSI - Indonesia Solidarity Action calls for international support for PRD. Messages of support may be faxed to PRD c/- Fax No. (+62 21) 794 1673. Please also send copies to AKSI. PRD also urgently needs financial support to help it maintain communications with the international community. Cheques or money orders may be sent AKSI, PO Box 458, Broadway, NSW 2007, Australia.

PRD to hold national meeting

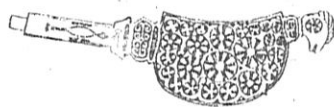
Sugeng Bahagijo declared on May 13 that the PRD would hold a national meeting within two months to begin the process of establishing branches throughout the country. "In that way PRD will develop a base right down to the village level. The PRD must be able to reach down to the villages. Because without the legitimacy that comes from broad support, the PRD will not be able to do anything. Legitimacy in the eyes of the people is more important than legality. Though we do need both of them."

Sugeng also explained to the media that PRD represented more than an extension of the Golput or election boycott groups formed during the last elections. "There are PRD members who did join the election boycott campaign. But there are those too where

were members of the PPP [Partai Persatuan Pembangunan - United Development Party] and the PDI [Partai Demokrasi Indonesia - Indonesian Democratic Party] at the time."

Asked why PRD members did not try to join the PPP or PDI, Sugeng explained that they deliberately established PRD as an organisation with equal standing with PPP, PDI and Golkar to add a new group which struggles for democracy. The release of the PRD declaration, said Sugeng, was precisely to announce to the public the formation of such an organisation, one that will struggle for democratisation in the economic, political and social fields.

Sugeng reaffirmed that the PRD would be waging a campaign to get public support for changes to the political parties law.



Marsinah cover-up protest

On May 8, 200 workers, students and NGO activists placed flowers on the grave of worker leader, Marsinah, one year after her murder. The commemoration was organised by Kompak (Kelompok Penerus Marsinah - In the Footsteps of Marsinah Group). Activists from Komapak told the press that as far as they were concerned May 8 was the anniversary of Marsinah's death.

The official date in what many activists consider a cover-up version of events says that Marsinah died on May 5.

In the meantime the Surabaya courts have sentenced four employees of the factory where Marsinah worked to sentences of

up to 12 years. According to Indonesian press supports, the judges relied mainly on the evidence of three prosecution witnesses, simply ignoring the evidence of other witnesses altogether.

The judges also chose to ignore the fact that defendants withdrew all their statements to the prosecuting authorities on the basis that they had been tortured. This was despite the fact the the government's own recently appointed Human Rights Commission also announced findings indicating that the defendants may have been tortured.

One further defendant, Captain Kusaeri, is awaiting news as to whether he will be "tried" before a military tribunal.

Victory for Yeni and friends

"This trial shows how rotten this regime has become. Democracy and human rights are simply a nonsense for the ruling elite", read a statement read out by Yeni Damayanti, Adi Kurniawan, Hendrik Sirait and Masduki, four of the 21 students recently sentenced for "insulting the head of state", President Suharto. Their comments were part of a prepared statement a prepared statement from the Indonesian Students Ac-

tion Front which criticized the administration of justice under the New Order regime. The student leaders was greeted with loud cheers as they read the statement.

The students received sentences of six months, the lightest sentences of any political activists ever tried on such charges. This is a major victory for Yeni and her colleagues who have remained outspoken and critical of the regime throughout the trial.

Rendra, Emha harassed

Police moved to disband an informal gathering of young people at the house of writer Emha Ainun Najib on May 6. Emha, a well known essayist and poet, was expecting as a guest another poet, namely, Rendra.

Rendra played a leading role during periods of protest, especially in the 1970s.

While waiting for Rendra, police arrived. "In the name of the police apparatus, we request that this gathering disband forthwith as it has no permit. These are orders from our superiors," they are quoted by *Detik newsworthy*, 11-17 May.

"It's banned, that's all!" was the repeated

refrain from the police in attendance.

Perhaps the "apparatus" are worried about Rendra repeating the climactic verse from his 1978 poem, "Poem of a Student Rally":

*There are the triumphant,
there are the humiliated;
There are those with weapons,
those with wounds;
There are those that sit,
and those sat upon;
There are those with abundance,
those who have lost all;
And you: on whose side do you stand?*

Where do you get news on the Indonesian democratic movement almost every week?

Which paper has activist-correspondents providing on the spot reports from Indonesia?

Name.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Enclosed is a cheque/money order for \$15 for 12 issues/\$30 for 22 issues/\$60 for 44 issues
Send to *Green Left Weekly*, PO Box 394,
Broadway, NSW 2007, Australia.

**Green
LEFT**
weekly



May 94 page 9

Worker demonstrations in North Sumatra

By Wardoyo

JAKARTA - For more than a week, tens of thousands of workers have taken to the streets of Medan, North Sumatra, and its satellite cities, in some of the most violent demonstrations seen here since the 1970s leaving one man dead, 12 injured, 150 shops ransacked and looted and cars set ablaze. Despite a massive deployment of security personnel and a ban on further street demonstrations by the authorities, this has had little effect and the protests continue unabated and are spreading to other cities.

The demonstrations started peacefully on April 14, when some 20 thousand workers went on strike in 24 factories in Medan and the industrial zones of Deli Serdang. The strikes were sparked by the mysterious death of a fellow worker.

Workers also demanded an end to military intervention in labour disputes, that the daily minimum wage be raised from 3,100 Rupiah (AUS\$2.20) to 7,000 Rupiah, the right to organise and specifically that the government recognise the trade union SBSI (Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia, Indonesian Trade Union for Prosperity) as well as the reinstatement of 360 workers dismissed by PT Korek Api Deli following the strike in March.

The demonstration marched to Medan some 11 kilometres away where they gathered at Merdeka Square in Central Medan. Workers from other areas also began arriving and the crowd quickly swelled to more than 30 thousand people representing as many as 50 factories.

The rally moved off in an orderly fashion towards the offices of the North Sumatra governor.

After debating for an hour and a half with security guards it was agreed that 23 representatives from 23 of the factories would be allowed inside. Negotiations began at midday attended by an officer from Bakorstanasda (Badan Koordinasi Stabilitas Nasional Daerah, Territorial Body for the Coordination for National Stability), the head of the Social Guidance Bureau, along with the regional representative of the ministry and the governor's public relations officer. Unknown to the workers, the governor

himself was in fact away for the week. Although the authorities promised to address the workers demands they failed to give any concrete answers when questioned further and forced the workers to terminate the negotiations. Workers remained outside the offices pressing for a clear response to their demands until the governor's public relations officer addressed the crowd promising that they would meet directly with the governor the next day knowing full well however, that he would still be unavailable.

Security forces then moved in, forcing the demonstrators back from the gates and after half an hour, protesters moved off followed closely by the security personnel. On reaching the Jalan Giugur By-pass anti riot police moved in firing tear gas into the crowd and rushing them with riot batons. The confrontation quickly turned into a full scale battle which lasted for at least four hours as protesters and riot police pelted each other with rocks. 20 workers were arrested and early the following morning arrested Ridwan Lubis (the secretary of SBSI Medan) at his house by the North Sumatra police.

The following day most shops were closed and security guards and soldiers guarding major department stores. Workers from the industrial zones of Binjai and Tanjung Morawa attempted to return for the promised meeting with the governor. However their route was blocked by ranks of security personnel armed with batons, and riot shields with tanks nearby and helicopter patrols overhead.

By midday workers were still demonstrating in the industrial areas. In an attempt to disperse the protesters security forces began firing over the crowd and workers ran into the central part of the industrial complex. It was in the midst of this conflict that a local Chinese business person July Kristanto, the owner of PT Sumatra Blau was found dead slouched over the wheel of his car.

By Sunday April 17, protests had died down, but the situation remained tense with nearly 80 factories in the Medan industrial zone and other areas around the city closed. Strikes continued in other towns such as Pematang Siantar, 90 kilometres south east of Medan, and in the satellite towns of Delina, Tanjung Morawa and Lubuk Pakam.

Despite reports of a ban on further demonstrations 18 protests erupted on the following Wednesday involving an estimated 9,000 workers from 22 factories.

The official response has as usual, attempted to "de politicise" the issue, focusing largely upon the violence and



destruction. The Director-General for Industrial Relations and Labour Standards, Suwanto for example said that the rallies were illegal and therefore the organisers should be prosecuted. He went on to explain that the riots were not a labour issue, but a criminal case which affected national and economic stability. The Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI) accused SBSI of fermenting "race riots" and vandalism. The chief of the ABRI General Staff, Lieutenant Colonel HBL Mantri told reporters that "We have data indicating SBSI [...] masterminded the violent worker rallies." He added that ABRI would deal firmly with those involved and that the strikers methods were reminiscent of the PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia, the outlawed Indonesian Communist Party). In Medan, Police Lieutenant Colonel Sukardi "verified" that the motive behind the worker protests were anti-Chinese. The chairperson of the government controlled union SPSI (Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia, the All Indonesian Workers Trade Union) Marzuki Achmed, said that the security forces should take harsh action against the "brutal" demonstrations saying

that he fully backed the decision of the North Sumatra military commander General A Pranowo, who banned street demonstrations and protests in the area, but then went on to say that he hoped that they wouldn't last so long as not to deprive workers of the right to strike. SBSI responded by denying that they had incited the protesters to violence, but admitted that they were involved in organising the protests and threatened to organise more strikes if the government refused to raise the minimum wage throughout the country. SBSI vice chairperson Sunarti said strikes would be organised in Lampung, Tangerang and Surabaya.

Bakorstanasda is now conducting an investigation of 20 strikers involved in the demonstrations while 60 others were released on Saturday. The city police chief Police Colonel Chairuddin Ismal claimed that two of those arrested were believed to have killed the local businessperson. There are currently 47 demonstrators being detained for questioning, dossiers (read confessions) on 15 of them have been completed and are soon to be submitted to the public prosecutor.

Help build solidarity with the
Indonesian democratic movement
Join AKSI now!

I want to join AKSI

Name.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Telephone.....

Send to your nearest group:

Adelaide: PO Box 781, Adelaide 5001.

Brisbane: PO Box 1293, Fortitude Valley 4006.

Canberra: c/- PO Box 196, Canberra City 2601.

Melbourne: PO Box 4345, Melbourne Uni, Parkville 3053.

Perth: c/- Room 4, 193 William St Arcade, Northbridge 6000.

Sydney: PO Box 458, Broadway 2007.



Fretilin Australia Speaks



Commemoration of the second anniversary of the Dili massacre outside parliament house, Darwin. Photo by Deb Sorensen.

May 20, 1994 marked the 20th anniversary of the formation of Fretilin (Frente Revolucionara do Timor Leste Independente), the largest East Timorese party struggling for independence from Indonesian rule.

The membership of Fretilin abroad held a crucial plenary over April 9 to 15 in Lisbon to discuss questions of organisation and strategy. AKSI member, Jon Lamb, spoke to Estanislau da Silva, one of the delegates from Australia that attended the plenary.

"This has been an historic meeting and the most important meeting of Fretilin abroad since 1975. For the first time we have elected a leadership involving delegates from Fretilin committees all over - Australia (Darwin, Perth, Sydney and Melbourne), Angola, Mozambique and Portugal. Representatives also came from London. There was the election of new chairperson of Fretilin Central Council of External Delegates, Jose Lues Guterres, new deputies and Central Council. Alfredo Ferreira and myself were elected to the Central Council as representatives from Australia. The opening ceremony was attended by representatives of various Portuguese parties, Jose Ramos Horta, special representative for CNRM (the National Council of Maubere Resistance) and greetings were received from UDT.

"Another decision of major importance was to take steps to hold a international convention of East Timorese, possibly in Australia, within the next two years. We are currently negotiating with UDT and other Timorese groups the appropriate location

and framework for the convention.

"There is a negotiating body for the diplomatic front, composed of Fretilin, UDT, and the special representative of CNRM, Jose Ramos Horta. This body will work on a working document for negotiation. The Fretilin chairperson and two deputies have a mandate to negotiate on behalf of Fretilin with UDT and Horta.

"In the recent fourth round of meetings in Geneva at the UN, the Indonesian foreign minister indicated that the Indonesian government would be prepared to meet with East Timorese leaders who are against integration with Indonesia. At the same time though, they say that they also have to negotiate with Timorese who are pro-Indonesia. So it is a sort of game they are playing in order to maintain the status quo.

"Ultimately there will be no solution without East Timorese representatives - not just Fretilin but all East Timorese groups".

De Silva also commented on the situation inside East Timor: "Anyone suspected of being a Fretilin sympathiser is harassed and assaulted by Indonesian soldiers. Even Bishop Belo has made lengthy statements that there is no freedom in East Timor.

"The armed resistance is still very much alive, even though we acknowledge it is a small unit. It is still causing a lot of problems for the Indonesian armed forces in East Timor. This can be seen by the number of Indonesian soldiers that are being maintained. There are at least 8 battalions comprising 30000 personnel still in Timor."

"We would also like to see the Australian solidarity movement intensify its activities - lobbying of politicians, government and other institutions. We would like to see demonstrations for peace on East Timor and more coordinated national actions of the East Timor support groups, for events like November 12 commemoration of the Dili massacre."