

CONCLUSION

The West Papuan nationalist movement has been in a new phase since 1998. The defeat of the Suharto regime at the hands of the *reformasi* movement shook the whole edifice of power in Indonesia. And it enabled West Papuans to imagine new possibilities in their relations with the central government. The Biak massacres in July 1998, two months after Suharto stepped down, was yet another case of the Indonesian security forces shooting civilians attempting to demonstrate their Papuan identity with a flag-raising ceremony. This precipitated a new activism, one in which nationalists, at least until August 2000, were able to act with a higher degree of toleration.

This time, however, because of the new political openness, there was a sense that Papuan outrage and frustration must be focussed, and channelled into political dialogue with the authorities. So in February 1999, the Team 100 went to Jakarta and candidly told President Habibie of West Papuans desire for independence. Their confidence reflected the fact that Habibie had agreed to allow a UN sponsored referendum in East Timor, and subsequent freeing of the East Timorese from Indonesian control. Whilst the international status of East Timor was different from that of West Papua, the nationalist leadership argue that the UN sponsored process in 1969 was not legitimate, and therefore must be reviewed by the international community. There was also recognition that the OPM as a military force was no longer the means to achieve their nationalist goals.

In West Papua as in Aceh and East Timor, the Indonesian security forces have used rape and torture in their counter-insurgency operations. This is firstly because they view virtually all Papuans as potential enemies. Also they appear to have the mindset described by Cynthia Enloe in relation to soldiers in counter-insurgency situations, who view women as the property of men, the symbols of men's honour, and crucial to the sustainability of the 'enemy's culture and livelihood (Enloe, 2000:134). Furthermore, organised and outspoken women are targeted because by refusing to be intimidated, they challenge the gendered notions of power instilled in military training.

The resistance and activism of West Papuan women is a response to repression, and is reinforced by both the churches and *Lembaga Adat* (Tribal Councils) such as LEMASA. For Yosepha Alomang, her personal experience of torture and intimidation have only

strengthened her resolve to speak out on behalf of her community. She is a village woman, a grass-roots activist, who through LEMASA, has worked closely with Tom Beanal, the Amungme and independence leader. For Beatrix Koibur, her personal involvement in a church team who worked with survivors of the Biak massacre, as well as the opportunities presented with *reformasi*, catalysed a new commitment to work openly for a 'new Papua'. She is urban, formally educated, and part of the current political structure led by Theys Eluay.

Both women, whilst from vastly different backgrounds, are fighting for West Papuan women's dignity and empowerment. However, I have seen little evidence that either of them is critical of the dominant role of men in the leadership of the movement. Nor have I found evidence that either of them is attempting to fashion a distinctly women's agenda. The recently formed Papuan Council, whilst representing all regions and all segments of society, does not appear to have addressed the issue of gender power relations. Of the thirty-one member Presidium, the executive body of the Council, women are considered a component, and thus have two representatives. Political decisions about the direction of the movement, for example the prepared material discussed at the May-June Congress, and the formation of *Satgas Papua*, appear to have been made by the male leadership.

As has been previously argued, without recognition of the gender power relations inherent in a nationalist movement, any future nation will most likely be one in which male dominance is perpetuated. West Papuan women have been actively involved in the resistance throughout the period of Indonesian rule, and current women's leaders are very aware of the need to advocate gender equality. However, it appears that women's involvement in the current political mobilisation is contributive, and does not challenge the male dominated power structures.

