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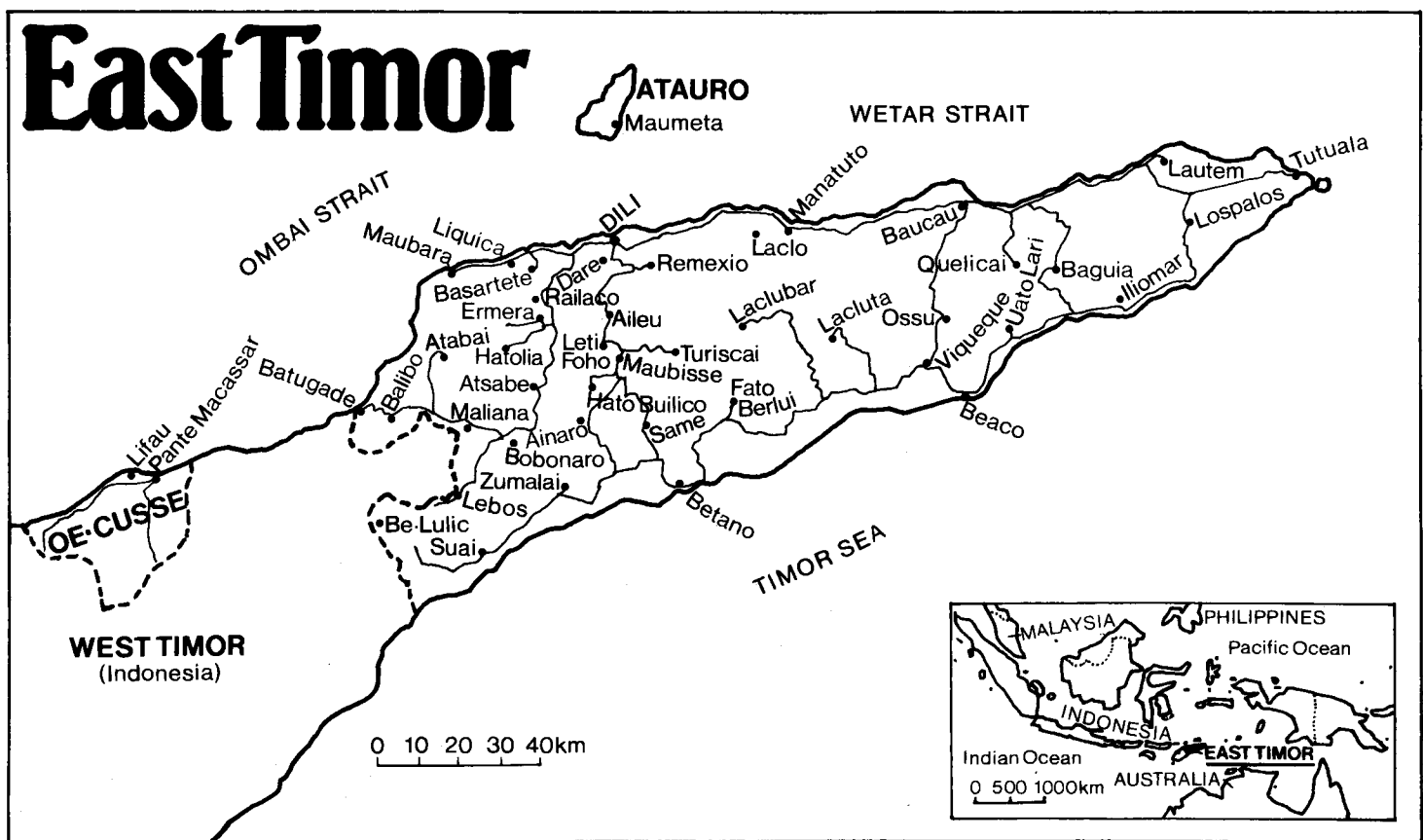
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timor LINK

No 2, June 1985



In this edition of EAST TIMOR LINK we include an important statement by the East Timorese Catholic church, emphasising that the rights of the people of the territory, including the right to decide their own future, must be respected. In its coherence and strength of purpose, it should shame the international community for its lack of moral courage in voting, at the UN Human Rights Commission, to delete East Timor from its agenda. More than ever, the Catholic church provides an important link for a people ravaged by war and isolated from the outside world. TIMOR LINK is a response to the pleas of Timorese Christians to make their situation better known.



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DEFENDING THE PEOPLE: A statement from the East Timorese Church

In this issue of TIMOR LINK we publish an important document from the East Timorese church, setting out its considered view of the situation in East Timor. The document was prepared for a meeting with the Indonesian authorities. Though dated 1 January, it has only recently reached Europe.

Authenticity and denial

Doubt was cast on the document's authenticity by reports in the Indonesian press, which quoted the papal pro-nuncio in Jakarta, Mgr. Pablo Puente, as saying that he had received a cable from Mgr. Belo denying authorship of the document. Our enquiries in church circles in both Lisbon and Jakarta, however, confirm that the denial may be 'diplomatic'.

Looked at closely, the original report in the Jakarta Post claimed only that Mgr. Belo has denied writing "a document alleging human rights abuses by the Indonesian military". The present document is best described not as an attack on Indonesia, but as a careful reflection on the situation in East Timor and an argued defence of the rights of the people of the territory.

The fact that Mgr. Belo felt he needed to comment on the document shows, once again, how little the Catholic leaders in East Timor are given freedom to speak on behalf of the people. Both Mgr. Belo and his predecessor, Mgr. da Costa Lopes, have been put under heavy pressure to 'correct' their criticism of Indonesian abuses.

The importance of the document

This is an important document. It reflects at length on the effects of Indonesia's counter-insurgency policy, commenting on the reprisals against civilians, their relocation into specially constructed villages, indiscriminate arrest and other violations of human rights. Noting that fresh forces continually arrive in the territory, it observes: "Can all this simply indicate the existence of a stubborn minority? (...) A war that continues for nine years cannot be imputed to the blind obstinacy of a minority".

The document is also a commentary on the concern expressed last year by Pope John Paul II. The Pope called for safeguards for 'the ethnic, religious, and cultural identity' of Timor's people. Different aspects of this identity are described here: language, traditional religion, the impact of Christianity and Portuguese culture - a delicate fabric under threat. It warns against any attempt to impose Indonesian culture on the Timorese. "To kill the culture is to kill the people."

While the document states the church's customary attitude that, as the church, it has no competence to offer political solutions, it ends by calling for dialogue with all parties concerned with the problem, and "notably the people of Timor as a whole represented by the movements currently active, both within the country and abroad". This comment reinforces statements made by Fretilin - and by numerous parliamentarians, church bodies and non-governmental organisations throughout the world that no 'settlement' will be just or acceptable to the people of East Timor unless their representatives are involved in negotiating the agreement.

The View of East Timor's Church

The Church, prompted by the deep conviction that it has, 'not only the right, but also the duty, to speak an authoritative word' on events which affect social life, feels the need to interpret, through its teaching (Pius XII), the situation of the people of East Timor. 'The church in Timor shares with the people the sorrow which oppresses it, the pain which torments it and the anguish it feels' (His Beatitude A.P. Khoraiichei, Patriarch of Antioch).

The Church knows that Timorese families have lost dear ones, freedom, possessions and homes; the Church is aware of the fact that minds have been hardened by the terrors of war, privations, and the flight of Timorese.

The Church in Timor, prompted by the conscience of duty itself and sensitive to the appeals of many and to the voice of a great silent majority, believes that the moment has come to set out the principles and standards which will explain its attitude towards the problem of the people of East Timor whilst making no claim to possess the answer to these problems.

In looking at East Timor, where it feels itself identified with the People, the Church, in the exercise of its mission, has not remained nor can it remain indifferent to/or divorced from the historical vicissitudes experienced by this same People.

Conscious of this mission, the Church wishes to set out what it believes to be essential and urgent measures for the defense and safeguarding of the fundamental values and human rights of the people of East Timor, and its identity, at this historical moment.

F A C T S

The 25th of April, 1974 brought the people of East Timor the opportunity to exercise their inalienable right of freedom to choose their own future.

On the basis of this right, recognized by the Portuguese government and promoted by the United Nations, three main political parties were formed, each with its own political ideas about how this right should be exercised. Notwithstanding the efforts of all concerned to find a solution that would safeguard the identity of the people of East Timor, the divergences eventually spilled over into armed conflict. The present armed conflict, however, which we are encouraged to see as fratricidal war, is a war in which one of the forces initially involved in that war is facing a regular army, the army of the Indonesian government with its military superiority.

D O C T R I N A L P R I N C I P L E S

The church, which lived with the people through all the events which have profoundly affected its social and political life since 1975, is grieved to find itself a witness to a process which is slowly leading to the ethnic, cultural and religious extinction of

the identity of the people of East Timor. The church proclaims and earnestly longs for peace, harmony and prosperity among all nations.

The Church affirms with the force that comes from its own mission that "the society and the people composing it are sovereign of their own destiny" (RH, No. 17.5, cfr. PP, No. 65).

The Church understands this principle to mean that a people has rights which must be safeguarded always and in all circumstances.

In our times, in which social awareness has grown enormously, no people freely accepts being governed by another. Only a real respect for such rights confers legitimacy on any regime. Furthermore, the rights which derive from power must be understood as based on respect for objective and inviolable human rights.

The Church is also convinced that the violation of human rights is linked to the violation of the rights of the nation, with which the individual is organically linked, as with a larger family.

We recognize that the Indonesian government has undertaken development in several sectors of the social life in East Timor, such as of schooling, agriculture, the media, transport and health. On the other hand, since 1975 and to the present, the people of East Timor have been experiencing the horrors of war, a war they did not want. There is no harmony; the well-being and happiness desired by all are far from being reality for the majority of the people. The Timorese people are exhausted, their dearest hopes are frustrated and they have been deluded by so many promises. That is why we must have the courage to go to the roots of all these evils. All parties involved in this conflict must accept their own responsibilities. We cannot divide them into good and bad.

Keeping a clear head, free from political bias and preconceived ideas, let us examine the facts. We cannot build the future on a present undermined by past mistakes. We must have the courage to examine the mistakes of the past so that their cause or causes can be removed and we may attain the happiness for which all long.

ANALYSIS

Down the centuries the Church in East Timor has shared the lot of the people and the social and political conditions that have affected their lives. As a result, the Church in East Timor has always been among and identified with the Timorese people, sharing their fate, rejoicing when they rejoiced at order, prosperity and freedom, sad when they were sad under oppression, errors or misfortune. Difficult times for the people of Timor were also difficult times for the church.

After nine years of occupation by the Indonesian government of this part of the territory, which it considers to be an integral part of the Indonesian nation, the war which they would have us believe to be a civil war goes on and continues to grow. The evidence for this is the continual arrival of Indonesian troops with heavy war material, the stationing of more than 10 military helicopters for operational purposes and of several airforce combat aircraft. In view of the permanent insecurity of the population in many regions of East Timor, the continuous exodus of Timorese, the continual internal forced migrations to resettlement camps, the lack of freedom of movement, we think that the moment has come to put the following questions:

Can all this simply indicate the existence of a

stubborn minority or does it reveal something deeper about the demand for a people's basic rights?

The Church believes that the people of East Timor feel that their fundamental human rights have been violated. Among these rights is the right of the Timorese people to choose and direct their own future. This means in fact the right to govern one's life according to one's own identity.

The Indonesian government proceeds from the assumption that the people of East Timor have already exercised the right to self-determination. However, the Church considers that the absence of the necessary conditions for this is one of the causes of the situation of distress endured by the Timorese people for the past nine years. A war that continues for nine years cannot be imputed to the blind obstinacy of a minority.

If that is the case, what justification can there be for the arrests, disappearances and the deportation of thousands of civilians during these nine years? On the other hand, if the majority of the Timorese people have already chosen their future, why then do they continue to be harassed and killed?

These are questions which suggest themselves to anyone who has witnessed all the events which have taken place since August 1975. It is therefore a necessary and urgent prerequisite for peace, social harmony and well-being that the Timorese people should be guaranteed the effective exercise of all the basic human rights.

ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

All human beings aspire to fulfill their own personal identity as an integral part of the environment in which they live. When internal or external factors lead to a weakening or, even more serious, to loss of this identity, the person as such is annihilated.

In East Timor we are witnessing an upheaval of gigantic and tragic proportions in the social and cultural fabric of the Timorese people and their identity is threatened with death. Each community and ethnic group has its own identity. In each community there is a set of cultural patterns and models of behaviour which are acquired by each of its members and determine common feelings and attitudes. This common core of feelings and attitudes which all the members of a same society share forms what some scientists call the fundamental structure of their personalities.

This is not the time to produce a study on the identity of the Timorese people. In the midst of this catastrophe devastating the people of East Timor, the Church's interest is in the human person, and it has no choice but to proclaim the message of salvation and human dignity, whilst condemning injustice and attacks on human dignity.

1. Ethnic Identity

The ethnic identity of the Timorese people is being seriously violated and threatened, as the following facts demonstrate:

a) Successive, systematic and regular search operations are carried out by the Indonesian army against strongholds of the resistance.

b) A permanent threat of being shot in reprisal hangs over the men and youths of the villages, whether considered as sympathising with and offering

refuge to the resistance forces or giving them support.

c) Minors are enlisted as auxiliaries in military operations.

d) Waves of arrests affect even the most inoffensive people.

e) Medical assistance for the population is ineffective for a wide range of endemic diseases.

f) The people are concentrated in new villages, in inhuman conditions, with no chance to feed themselves by cultivating their land and dependent solely on irregular aid.

g) More able-bodied people are taken out of their communities and trained for military operations.

h) The compulsory night-watch duty which is carried out under inhuman conditions.

i) Key posts in the public administration are being occupied by Indonesians, generally members of the military, resulting in a gradual marginalisation of the Timorese.

j) The gotong-royong ('Mutual-help Program') is being carried out without taking account of the needs of the people.

2. Religious Identity

The Timorese people live by religious beliefs. They recognise the existence of Maromac, the supreme being, as the source of all temporal and spiritual good. They worship lulics (sacred relics) and practise the cult of the souls of ancestors and venerate certain objects, erecting lulic houses where they keep the instruments of the cult.

After the arrival of the Catholic missionaries many Timorese abandoned animism and became Christians. Today there are about 400,000 Catholics in East Timor.

Lack of respect for the religious tradition of the Timorese, even where it is animist, is an attempt to destroy the people's beliefs. In ethical matters, the Timorese people live according to the principles of the Gospel and Christian morality and treating Christianity and other religions as equal, they have their own popular piety.

Accusations against priests, arrests of catechists, banishment and killing of Christians are an attempt to destroy the religious life of the people, and thereby the identity of the Timorese people.

3. Cultural Identity

"The word 'culture' in its general sense indicates everything whereby human beings develop and perfect their many bodily and spiritual qualities; and strive by their knowledge and their labour to bring the world itself under their control. They render social life more human both in the family and the civic community, through improvement of customs and institutions. Throughout the course of time they express, communicate and conserve in their works, great spiritual experiences and desires, that they might be of advantage to the progress of many, even of the whole human family" (GS No. 53.1).

The people of East Timor have their own way of expressing their feelings through legends, stories and traditions that are manifested in certain usages and customs.

In contact with the Portuguese, Western civilization and under the influence of Christianity, this culture has taken on new forms and expressions which have given the Timorese their historical identity. In short: There is a Timorese culture that is made up of words, attitudes, emotions, reactions, behaviour, ways of being and relating to the world. It is in these things that the people recognize their own culture and in it their own identity. They take pride in them and draw from them the basis of their security as a society with the ability to assert their own destiny.

All attempts to hinder or to prevent this evolution would be an attack that the people of East Timor, like any other people, would find intolerable.

An attempt to indonesianize the Timorese people through vigorous campaigns to promote pancasila, through schools or the media, by alienating the people from their world-view, means the gradual murder of Timorese culture. To kill the culture is to kill the people.

"Every country, rich or poor, has a cultural tradition handed down from past generations. This tradition includes institutions required by life in the world, and higher manifestations - artistic, intellectual and religious - of the life of the spirit. When the latter embody truly human values, it would be a great mistake to sacrifice them for the sake of the former. Any group of people who would consent to let this happen, would be giving up the better portion of their heritage; in order to live, they would be giving up their reason for living. Christ's question is directed to nations also: 'What does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world but suffer the loss of his own soul?' (PP Nr. 40, Mt. 16.26).

CONCLUSION

These considerations and this judgement of conscience is addressed by the Catholic Church in Timor to the Indonesian government. As we have previously mentioned, our motive in issuing this statement is the sense of a sacred duty of fidelity to the Church's own divine mission and absolute fidelity to the people to whom we were sent to proclaim truth, justice, love, and human dignity according to the spirit of the Gospel and the social doctrine of the Church.

We appeal with the utmost urgency and energy for unswerving respect for the fundamental human rights and ethnic, cultural, and religious identity of the people of East Timor.

We also appeal for the creation of the conditions essential for an open, frank and fruitful dialogue between the different parties concerned in resolving the problem, notably the people of Timor as a whole represented by the movements currently active, both within the country and abroad, free from any form of coercion.

The Apostolic Administrator Carlos Filipe
and the Council of Priests Ximenes Belo
of the Diocese of Dili (Apostolic
Administrator)

Dili, January 1st, 1985

ABBREVIATIONS

RH - Pope John Paul II, encyclical, Redemptor Hominis.

PP - Pope Paul VI, encyclical, Populorum Progressio.

GS - Second Vatican Council, decree The Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes).

THE VOTE AGAINST EAST TIMOR AT THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

In March 1985, in closed session, the 41st meeting of the UN Human Rights Commission, meeting in Geneva, removed East Timor from its agenda. The vote was close - 11 to 9, with 20 abstentions - but it is the first time that a UN body has voted in favour of Indonesia's point of view. Adrien-Claude Zoller, who followed the session closely as Pax Christi's representative, made these comments afterwards.

* * * * *

It does look as though the Human Rights Commission failed to discharge its responsibilities over East Timor, and has become an accessory to a genocide which might still be halted.

The debate on East Timor poses a double question: concerning economic and strategic interests on the one hand (Indonesia is an immense market, particularly for arms, and its military regime offers 'security for investments'), and the fait accompli on the other. Since the territory was invaded by the Indonesian armed forces in 1975, nine years have passed during which the protests of the international community have had no effect on the Indonesian policy of terror and repression. These two factors define the position of an ever growing number of countries. (...)

At the 39th Session in 1983, the Commission adopted a resolution confirming East Timor's right to self-determination. Last year, no resolution was put to the Commission, and the Sub-Commission adopted a resolution on a very small majority - 8 votes in favour, 1 against and 11 abstentions (August 1984). Thus, as time passes, so the situation in East Timor worsens, and support for the cause of East Timor declines. (...)

During this 41st Session, several non-governmental organisations (NGO) intervened in the debate on self-determination: Pax Romana, the International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples, and Pax Christi. Amnesty International presented a written statement. (...) The vote on East Timor took place during the confidential procedure, on Friday March 1st, at the beginning of the session: to ensure that the NGO lobbying did not alter the views of some delegations, the Indonesian delegation asked, in effect, to change the rules and begin with Timor, rather than follow alphabetical order (their excuse was that the Ambassador had to return to Jakarta that evening). This forced the decision. Moreover, according to our sources, the Indonesian delegation referred during the private session to false information, claiming for example that a report of the International Committee of the Red Cross concluded the situation in East Timor had improved, and citing the position of the Apostolic Administrator of East Timor, Mgr. Belo. The resolution won 9 votes against 11, with 20 abstentions. The vote marked the end of the confidential procedure. (...).

This result enables us to evaluate the Portuguese position better. Why was it that Portuguese diplomacy failed to stop the European and above all the Latin American countries from voting negatively (against or abstaining)? The efforts of Catholic organisations would no doubt have been more effective, if diplomats had felt Portugal had the political will to oppose Indonesia. A comparison of the two delegations illustrates the problem: Indonesia was represented by 8 diplomats, including 3 ambassadors. On the

Portuguese side, there were only two diplomats, from the mission in Geneva. The Portuguese government might have submitted evidence to the Commission, but nothing was done.

What are the consequences of this vote?
Formally, the termination of a confidential procedure is not a disaster: it allows the problem to be raised publicly. Nevertheless, the fact is that, for the first time at the United Nations, there has been a vote on East Timor favourable to Indonesia. This is undoubtedly negative. All the same, some countries drop out of the private session one year and re-enter the year after. This was the case of Pakistan in 1984 and 1985. Also, the NGO's who came together for this session of the Commission succeeded in informing all the delegations about the true facts in Timor. The NGO's insistence in asking the Commission to consider this as a case of genocide could bear fruit - above all because the Indonesian delegation was not able to refute the NGO accusations and made polemical attacks against them.

What initiatives should be taken for the future?
It will no doubt be difficult to reverse this political balance and it will be necessary to work over a long period. We must constantly introduce new elements in all the procedures of the United Nations: private procedure 1503, and those concerning summary execution, enforced or involuntary disappearances, torture, and native peoples, to take just the most important. Documents must be submitted to the United Nations Secretariat by an NGO with consultative status, in proper form. Pax Romana, Pax Christi, the World Council of Churches and Amnesty International could do this.

Still in relation to the United Nations, it remains crucial to make sure that the NGO's maintain a permanent presence during the sessions of the Sub Commission and the Commission. NGO's which took part in the fourth meeting of East Timor solidarity groups (London, 12-13 January 1985) should come together to finance this work. For the 1985 Sub-Commission, two objectives seem particularly important:

a) contact the British expert Ben Whitaker who is responsible for preparing the report on genocide, and provide him with sufficient information and personal testimony to enable him to include East Timor in his report. (Ben Whitaker, Minority Rights Group, Benjamin Franklin House, 36 Craven St., London WC2N 5NG).

b) prepare a report on events which have taken place in East Timor during 1985 for members of the Sub-Commission, in other words on facts which the Commission was unable to examine.

It obviously remains necessary to continue to lobby governments, in particular western countries. Their complicity with Indonesia, because of the arms and oil trade, should be denounced vigorously.

* * * * *

NOTE. Copies of the statements submitted by Pax Christi and Pax Romana to the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, March 1985, are available from CIIR or can be obtained from Pax Christi, Kerkstraat 150, B-2000 Antwerp, Belgium, or 3 rue Argand, CH-1201 Geneva, Switzerland; or Pax Romana, P.O. Box 85, CH-1211 Geneva 20 CIC, Switzerland.

The Portuguese Government and the UN Initiative

The deletion of East Timor as an item on the agenda of the UN Commission on Human Rights, and Portugal's failure to press East Timor's case effectively, have focussed attention on the discussions which the Portuguese and Indonesian governments have been holding, at the initiative of the UN secretary General, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, and the official he has appointed to see through this question, Mr. Ahmed.

Some things can be said with confidence about these discussions. Firstly, while the talks are 'open' and no conditions have been set on how they proceed, it is clear that, if Indonesia continues obstinately to refuse to discuss the central issues of self-determination, no amount of talking will produce a just settlement. Secondly, the discussions were arranged in accordance with the wording of the 1982 resolution on East Timor which asked the Secretary General to 'initiate consultations with all parties directly concerned, with a view to exploring avenues for achieving a comprehensive settlement of the problem,' (our emphasis) - and it is clear that this formula is being interpreted in different ways. Mr. Ahmed (and Mr. de Cuellar?) has interpreted it to mean Portugal and Indonesia alone; other diplomats believe it should be interpreted more liberally - for example to include the UN itself, or the Vatican; and a number of governments - and virtually all NGO's - believe that discussions must include representatives of the Timorese people, including Fretilin.

Fretilin itself has made clear that it supports mediation by the United Nations provided this takes place on terms which respect the UN Charter, including the commitment to self-determination. Fretilin also accepts that other groups may represent the Timorese people alongside Fretilin, but affirms unconditionally that Fretilin and other representatives of the people must be parties to negotiations.

Portugal

Where does the Portuguese government stand on these questions, which are fundamental to the success of any talks, and also to the attitude which church and non-governmental organisations will adopt towards them?

There is no clear answer to this question at present. As one informed observer in Portugal described the situation: "The government misses no opportunity to pass responsibility over to the UN Secretary General, while numerous other countries (...) say the solution lies in the negotiations between Portugal and Indonesia".

The problem is that the Portuguese government is divided. Whereas President Eanes is personally committed to achieving a political solution - he raises the issue regularly, as he did with Pope John-Paul II, with President Reagan and during a recent trip to China - the Socialist Government of Prime Minister Soares is luke-warm at best. And under the Portuguese constitution, it is the Prime Minister who exercises power.

Moreover, President Eanes' term of office ends this year, creating uncertainty because it is not

clear whether his successor will be as supportive.

United Nations

Following Portugal's rebuff at Geneva, the government has held talks with Portuguese organisations working in support of East Timor, and has undertaken to work to reinsert East Timor on the UN agenda, and to lobby more effectively to secure a positive vote.

Discussions with Indonesia

So far, the discussions between officials of the Indonesian and Portuguese governments (which do not constitute formal negotiations) have focussed on (1) the repatriation of Portuguese officials and their families still detained in East Timor, and (2) the question of religious liberties. The Indonesian government has circulated a public statement on the latter issue, and it is known that the Vatican has become increasingly involved. The Timorese church's view is set out in the Reflection published in this Timor Link.

Self-determination

Though it remains unclear whether the Portuguese will show any firmness at all in defending their commitment to self-determination, there are some signs that at least in some quarters Portuguese officials are moving towards accepting the positions held by Fretilin and most outside observers - namely, that the UN commitment to the people of the territory must be upheld if negotiations are to be seen to be honourable, and that this means that Portugal must insist that representatives of the Timorese people, including eventually Fretilin, are included in negotiations.

Our attitude

It must be admitted that for Portugal the situation is a delicate one: the Indonesian government will break off talks at the first favourable opportunity if it sees an advantage in doing so - and this would close off the only channel which seems at present to offer any chance of reaching a negotiated settlement.

On the other hand, if Portugal should fail to defend the principle of self-determination - or fail to secure representation of Timorese, including Fretilin, among the negotiations - the talks with Indonesia will not be negotiations at all, but a shabby sell-out. Portugal's Western allies in the United States and Europe (who have done so little to help) will not respect Portugal more, but less, if it assists meekly in such a process - and church and non-governmental organisations around the world would be forced to organise against the talks.

NOTE: The Portuguese solidarity groups have asked those committed to East Timor's struggle for justice to make their views known to Portuguese leaders with particular responsibility for this issue.

- Presidente da Republica, General Ramalho Eanes,
Palacio de Belem, 1300 Lisboa

- Primeiro Ministro, M. Mario Soares,
Palacio de S. Bento, 1200 Lisboa

- Presidente da Assembleia, M. Fernando Amaral,
Ass. da Republica, Largo das Cortes, 1200 Lisboa

- Ministro dos Negocios Estrangeiros,
Ministerio dos Neg.Estr, Largo do Rilvas, 1300 Lisboa

For advice about such letters, consult:

- Comissao Para os Direitos do Povo Maubere (CDPM)
rua Pinheiro Chagas 77/2, 1000 Lisboa;
- Em Timor leste A Paz E Possivel,
rua de Campolide 215/4, 1000 Lisboa.

It would also be helpful if parliamentarians in your country would write to Portuguese parliamentarians, offering their support for negotiations on a just basis.

Parliamentarians call for Timorese presence at UN talks

On June 3rd, Lord Avebury, Chairman of the British Parliamentary Human Rights Group, will make public an international list of parliamentarians who have signed a declaration calling for East Timor's people to be included, through their representatives, in negotiations between Portugal and Indonesia which are being conducted under the aegis of the United Nations Secretary General, Mr. Perez de Cuellar. Below is the text of the Declaration, which has so far been signed by over 300 parliamentarians.

DECLARATION ON BEHALF OF EAST TIMOR

Recognising that the territory of East Timor has been illegally occupied by Indonesia since December 1975, inflicting extreme loss of life and destruction;

Recognising that the Indonesian policy to isolate East Timor prevents the ICRC and other relief and development agencies from reaching those in need, and denies the international community opportunities to assess the wishes of the people independently;

Condemning the human rights violations committed since 1975, as reported by Church leaders in East Timor and by independent human rights organisations;

Recognising that the East Timorese have been denied their right to self-determination;

Welcoming, finally, UN General Assembly Resolution 37/30 which asked the UN Secretary General "to initiate consultations with all parties directly concerned, with a view to exploring avenues for achieving a comprehensive settlement of the problem", and acknowledging the steps which have been taken to bring Portugal and Indonesia into negotiations;

WE AFFIRM that negotiations will not lead to a just settlement unless they:

1. Involve representatives of the East Timorese people, including those who resist the present occupation;
2. Secure an end to hostilities which prevent the people of East Timor and their representatives from contributing freely to negotiations leading to self-determination;
3. Provide internationally acceptable conditions of access to relief and development agencies and to independent visitors, journalists and diplomats;
4. Include an act of self-determination, which is free from interference and verified by international observers acceptable to the East Timorese people.

We commend all international initiatives which

observe these principles, and will call upon our government to support actively a process of negotiation conducted on such terms.

Suharto's Promise on the ICRC

Mrs. Thatcher, the British Prime Minister, visited Indonesia in April and held talks with President Suharto which touched on East Timor. At the request of British NGO's and a number of parliamentarians, she raised the question of human rights violations and asked about the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which has not been granted regular access to the mainland of East Timor since mid-1983. On her return Mrs. Thatcher wrote to say that she had been "assured that not only did the Red Cross have access to East Timor but was welcome there."

It will be remembered that from 1975 to 1979 the ICRC was prevented by Indonesia from working in East Timor, and that in mid-1983 the ICRC was forced to close down its programme on the mainland of East Timor because restrictions were placed on the movement of its staff. President Suharto's apparent commitment to Mrs. Thatcher is therefore welcome: it is understood that ICRC officials are already planning to visit rural areas to assess the needs for an aid programme for the first time since 1983. But will the Indonesian authorities respect the ICRC's need to work without interference and according to independent criteria? Observers of East Timor since 1975 must be sceptical. Watch this space....

INTERNATIONAL ROUND-UP

East Timor Tour Committee

The success of East Timorese delegates to this conference makes it particularly important to ensure that East Timor is represented at the International Women's Forum, due to be held in Nairobi, Kenya, in July. An East Timor Tour Committee has been formed in Australia to send up to three East Timorese delegates to represent East Timor. They are appealing for support at the Conference, and financial assistance to cover the costs of attending.

Address: East Timor Tour Committee
183 Gertrude St.
Fitzroy, Victoria 3065

Can you help?

Asian Youth Committee/ International Women's Forum

New Delhi, Oct. 1984

Nairobi, July 1985

The Asian Youth Assembly, organised in New Delhi by the Christian Conference of Asia, was the 'first major Ecumenical Youth Assembly held in Asia in 20 years', according to Mimi Ferreira, East Timor's

representative: there were almost 300 delegates from 25 countries. In the face of opposition from 9 Indonesian delegates, who walked out of the Conference, the Assembly supported a resolution in support of East Timor which stating that the Assembly:

- shares the deep concern of the worldwide Christian Community at the continuing sufferings, violence and abuse of Human Rights in East Timor,

- expresses its solidarity with the church and the People of East Timor in their struggle for peace and justice,

- joins with the head of the East Timor church, Mgr. Belo, in calling for a cease-fire, the withdrawal of the Indonesian Armed Forces and a dialogue between Indonesia and the Fretilin-led-resistance,

- urges the UN Secretary General and the Portuguese Government in their efforts to achieve a political settlement to uphold the right of the East Timorese to Self-Determination,

- urges each delegation to this assembly to seek support for settlement of the East Timor conflict.

This is believed to be the first time that an Asian forum has supported East Timor, and is important because the Assembly established the agenda for the Asian youth and student movements for the next decade.

After France and Australia, New Zealand?

The failure of the Socialist governments in power in Australia and France to take positions on East Timor which are independent of either the United States or Indonesia has disappointed many observers, not least because the governments of both countries are quite aware that the situation inside East Timor is much worse than they claim. Is the government of New Zealand now allowing itself to be driven down the same path?

The Indonesian government would like to believe so: it circulated at the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva extracts from an interview with Prime Minister Lange on Radio New Zealand, in which Mr Lange said that New Zealand would grant aid to East Timor and would take up human rights cases with the Indonesian government. But he also said that a report from New Zealand's ambassador "shows clearly that there is a marked improvement in the quality of life - both as to economic well-being and (...) Liberty is actually better overall. That is the implication of the report".

Letters asking for clarification of this apparently confused statement could be sent to New Zealand Embassies.

Venezuela

A conference on 'People's Liberation - Self-determination and the Responsibility of the International Community' approved a motion on East Timor which re-affirmed the right of East Timorese to self-determination and independence, and expressed concern for the systematic violations of human rights in the territory.

Organised by the Latin American Foundation for

Human Rights and Social Development (Venezuela), the University of Peace in Belgium and the Latin American Justice and Peace Service (Brazil), the conference was held between March 19 and 26.

The United States

While U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Paul Wolfowitz declared on a visit to Australia earlier this year that conditions in East Timor have been improving, and that the Indonesian authorities have been granting more access to outside observers, 131 members of the American House of Representatives said in a letter to President Reagan on released on May 8, 1985 that they were "deeply concerned about the continuing human tragedy in East Timor".

This is the largest number of American Congressmen to have signed a statement of concern about the territory.

The President discussed East Timor with the Portuguese government while he was in Lisbon in May. During his visit, Mgr. de Costa Lopes, the Apostolic Administrator before Mgr. Belo, presented him with the reflection written by the Timorese clergy and appealed to the United States to exercise its moral authority to secure a just settlement.

West Germany

Five members of the German Parliament visited East Timor in February for two days. After their brief visit, all five called upon the Indonesian government to dissolve the detention camp in Atauro island, and return the detainees to their homes.

EXTRACTS FROM A LETTER TO MGR. DA COSTA LOPES, FROM A MEMBER OF FRETELIN IN OCTOBER 1984

Most Revd Mgr D. Martinho Lopes,

...This letter is to inform you that I have now been in the bush since August 8, 1983 in order to continue the struggle in the armed resistance in the mountains of East Timor. On August 8 there was an appeal for struggle calling on all the brothers in the towns of East Timor to rise up in arms and leave their wives and children to the enemy and today we are continuing our armed struggle until Suharto withdraws his troops from our beloved country.

We ask you, Monsignor, to increase your efforts, and hope that your efforts will be successful and one day attain the final objective for which our East Timorese people are waiting, national independence.

On August 8, 1983 the armed uprising (took place) in Ponta Leste, which is the suco best known to you and is a suco in which you talked to Commander-in-Chief Kairala Xanana Gusmao.

I can tell you, Monsignor, that from that moment, since I was liurai or raja, we organised an uprising with 52 weapons and a Javanese police submachine gun left in the suco.

From the time of the rising until now, the enemy has raped our wives and imprisoned the majority of the

population, men, women and our grown daughters who have done nothing wrong, whom they have shamelessly raped and used as 'nonas', as in the Colmera colonial period. At the same time there were massacres and removals.

The suffering of the people of East Timor is increasing daily, with tortures, massacres, removals to Atauro and hunger throughout East Timor from East to West.

In order to reduce the sufferings of our people Monsignor must strive abroad and count on us that the struggle will continue in the mountains of East Timor to the last drop of blood unless Suharto withdraws his forces from East Timor.

The rising was not limited to the suco where I was, but from Ponta to the border, and today the mountains of East Timor are completely occupied by ASSWAIN guerrillas, and if Suharto sends more than 100 battalions we shall not be afraid, and we shall continue to fight, to fight to the last drop of blood, because in a war it is necessary to die to free one's country and people.

Since the rising of August 8 1983 I have spent a year in the resistance as commander of the 1st autonomous company, based in Ponta Leste.

(There follows a list of particular attacks between August 20, and November 7, 1983.)

...guerrilla hit and run actions (continue) day and night without stopping in the towns, the hamlets and in the enemy advances on our strongholds in the bush. This is the case not just in my company, but throughout East Timor, from Tutuala to the border, to carry out the order 'Exterminate the mighty enemy at every contact.'

And as to the destruction of concentration camps, again we have already destroyed the majority between Tutuala and the border, because the enemy was going around saying that there was no longer war in East Timor, but all was progress and peace.

We ask you, Monsignor, to tell the delegations which come to East Timor to go by car to the district centres (concelhos) and out-stations (postos), at least to the outstation of Tutuala, and see if they come back saying that 'East Timor enjoys progress and peace,' and then where and in what state are the hamlets of Pitileti, Iroro, Vero, Tobailoro, Porlamano, Meara, Sori, Cepelata, Luarai, Missao, Tobauluturo, Irauno, Etepiti and Soikili Irralafai.

We ask you, Monsignor, not to forget us in your prayers. One day, without doubt, we shall meet...

Miguel dos Santos
Commander, 1st autonomous company

NO IGNORANCE - NO EXCUSE - REVIEWS

'A faraway country of which we know nothing.' This hoary excuse for passivity in the face of injustice may once have been true of East Timor, but is fast ceasing to be so. News from East Timor has been reaching the outside world in growing volume in the last two years. The very variety of the sources, ranging from private letters and anecdotes to formal reports, political statements and religious reflections, is evidence of a widespread determination among the Timorese not to submit in silence to the destruction of their society and culture. This information has prompted analysis and reflection outside Timor in a steadily growing circle, most notably among church groups, answering the appeal of the church in East Timor.

Pro Mundi Vita

Pro Mundi Vita, the respected Roman Catholic research institute in Brussels, took East Timor as the theme for one of its Dossiers in 1984. This study, based on work by the Netherlands Justice and Peace Commission earlier in 1984, provides a comprehensive introduction to the question, with plentiful source references. In addition to summarising the events since the 1975 invasion, the study analyses a number of aspects in a detail not matched elsewhere - for example, Indonesia's fear in 1975 that an independent left-wing East Timor would encourage separatist tendencies elsewhere in the Indonesian archipelago, or might bring the USSR or China into the region as its backer. There are also detailed accounts of the reaction and subsequent policies of the United States and Australia, Timor's nearest neighbour. The description of the church's role, especially that of the Vatican, is illuminating.

Their faith stands firm

The dossier draws heavily on the various church statements which have come out of East Timor in the last four years, particularly the powerful reflection of the religious of East Timor, sent to the Indonesian Major Religious Superiors in 1981:

The people are now experiencing oppression without end, rights are not acknowledged. The people do not have a voice, and live in fear. Indeed the people live in a situation of continual war, and thus must be silent and submissive. But they remain in a very clear position concerning their ideals. Their faith stands firm and is strengthened, although it is not always able to be expressed in words, but is seen with the eyes of faith by the religious who accompany the people....the East Timorese religious feel solidarity with the people and, because of that, feel obliged to express the people's experience of faith. For us living the faith without serious endeavours for the building of social justice is making faith merely foreign and mystical. Creating justice together with the present Indonesian government is not possible, or not yet, although the people desire justice greatly. A faith which illuminates the minds of the people cannot develop in a Christian action, because social justice has not yet come into being. There is,

as yet, no way out from the oppression from above. Because of that we, the religious, must always be alert and thoughtful that the faith of the people is not trodden on.

There is also discussion of the position of the Catholic minority in Indonesia which includes the challenging assessment of a 'dissident' Indonesian Jesuit: 'The decision we make on East Timor - to speak out or not to speak - will determine in large measure what we will be as a church. Are we another bloc in a society seeking prosperity and influence, or are we a religious community led by the gospel?'

PMV traces the continuing witness of the Timorese church across the change of leadership from Mgr. da Costa Lopes to Mgr. Belo and the growing response from particular churches round the world and, in the last year, also from the pope. It concludes with this appeal, which TIMOR LINK wholeheartedly makes its own:

To be the voice of, and to stand up for, the genuine rights of its people is a heavy burden for the Church in East Timor. To carry on she needs not only sympathy but real support from the sister Churches all over the world, not only to alleviate the suffering of her people but to stand up for the internationally recognised right of self-determination.

CIIR's East Timor 'Comment'

Comment is a much shorter survey of the problem than the Pro Mundi Vita study, and its new third edition devotes considerable attention to the discussion of East Timor in international bodies, though it appeared before the removal of Timor from the agenda of the UN Human Rights Commission became known. The Comment discusses the position of Portugal, criticises the discussions held under UN auspices between Indonesia and Portugal because these have so far excluded 'those principally concerned by the dispute - the people of East Timor and their representatives'.

The Comment concludes with a plea to Western governments to press Indonesia to open East Timor to the outside world:

The deaths, disease, hunger and break-up of families in East Timor are not the result of a natural disaster but of Indonesian policies. Western governments should press Indonesia on all these issues.

The War Against East Timor

International protest about East Timor is not simply an expression of moral outrage; it is a direct response to the appeals of the people of East Timor themselves. The international campaign has been made possible only by the stubborn resistance carried on by the Fretilin resistance movement and its army, Falintil. It is this resistance which is the subject of The War Against East Timor. The book has some of the qualities of a detective story, building up a picture of the East Timorese resistance from a vast range of sources, but notably from captured Indonesian military documents. These documents, quoted extensively in an appendix, are a revealing contrast with the travel brochure prose of official Indonesian descriptions of East Timor.

Support networks everywhere

Villages are graded by degrees of 'troublesomeness', and detailed instructions are given on preventing

infiltration by the 'GPK' (the name given to Fretilin by the Indonesian military). The documents, whose authenticity has never been challenged, put into context both individual Indonesian military actions and their development programmes. Document 5, in particular, noting that 'GPK support networks exist in all settlements, the villages as well as the towns,' is a fascinating case study, from the other side, of the setting up of such a support network.

It is the use of firsthand documents which gives The War Against East Timor its particular fascination. Refugees letters and interviews, Fretilin documents and church statements are combined to give a vivid account of life inside East Timor. The book traces the resistance movement from the dark days of 1978 when massive bombing destroyed Fretilin's last mountain headquarters, and the leadership split and surrendered or was killed, to the gradual rebuilding of the organisation to the point where the Indonesian commander in January 1983 said, 'They cannot be crushed in the way the PLO struggle was ended in Lebanon. These Fretilin remnants cannot be crushed by fierce methods. They can only be dealt with by cajolement.'

A new offensive

Unfortunately, this moment of enforced humanity, which led during the middle of 1983 to talks between Fretilin and the local Indonesian commander, was brief. Soon after his appointment to commander of the Indonesian armed forces, General Benny Murdani, who had masterminded the invasion in 1975, cracked down with a new offensive, which has continued ever since.

Pro Mundi Vita: Dossiers (4/1984) - available from PMV, Rue de la Limite 6, B-1030 Brussels, Belgium or CIIR, 22 Coleman Fields Road, London N1 7AF. UK price - 75p.

Comment (East Timor, March 1984) - available from CIIR. Price - 30p.

The War Against East Timor by Carmel Budiardjo and Liem Soei Liong (1984) - available from ZED Press Ltd., 57 Caledonian Road, London N1 9BU and also TAPOL, 8A Treport St., London SW18 2BP, £18.95 hardback, £6.95 paper.



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STOP PRESS

As this edition of TIMOR LINK went to press, news broke in Australia that Fretilin has re-established radio contact with Darwin. We expect to have more news about this important development in the next edition of TIMOR LINK.

W E A R E L O O K I N G F O R R E A D E R S

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