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NEWS FROM INSIDE

NEW OFFENSIVE

by John Taylor

A major offensive has been underway for over two months. It is apparently code-named *Operasi Kikis*, or Operation Eradicate. Reports variously estimate that between thirty and fifty Indonesian battalions are involved, that is, between 27,000 and 45,000 troops.

Twelve of these battalions have been directed specifically to locate Fretilin leader Xanana Gusmao, in the Eastern zone.

However, most of the troops seem to be concentrated in the Central zone. They are supported by heavy artillery and aerial bombardment. As in previous such operations, the local population has been conscripted to act as beaters and bearers — hence the colloquial name 'fence of legs' — with the aim of surrounding and capturing Fretilin units. In the past, groups of such unarmed civilians have been driven ahead of armed Indonesian units towards surrounded Fretilin guerrillas — who are left with no alternative but to shoot at the civilians or surrender (and often enough then be killed themselves).

Since 1981, when the present series of offensives began, these tactics have caused losses to Fretilin but have failed to destroy its organisation or leadership. By contrast, they have

caused great suffering to the civil population, both directly — as a result of disease or hostilities — and indirectly, because villagers are unable to cultivate their crops while they are away.

The Indonesian military command is claiming that the offensive is a justified response to a Fretilin attack on Viqueque early in October, following which the town was occupied for three days. Several Indonesian soldiers were killed. Diplomatic sources in Jakarta, however, stress that the operation was specifically designed to create more secure conditions for the legislative elections that will be held in April next year.

(Rumours still continue to surface that Portugal may agree to view these elections as an act of self-determination, though *East Timor Link's* sources in Lisbon say that the Portuguese government ruled out this option earlier in the year, because it would be impossible to defend. See issue number 7.)

A refugee recently described how a dry run for these elections was held in July of this year. The object of the exercise was, apparently, to determine how many votes *Golkar*, the government party, would get. Areas of weakness were pinpointed for the 'real'

election.

According to such reports, the village heads work together with local military commanders to provide information on how to vote for *Golkar*. They set up three boxes, marked PPP (for the United Democratic Party), PDI (for the Indonesian Democratic Party) and *Golkar*. *Golkar* is always in the centre, and people are shown how to choose the middle box. According to this report, the village head collected everyone's identity card, and registered the whole village as supporting *Golkar*.

Only these three parties will be permitted to present candidates at the election. None of the three have any historical base in East Timor. It has been confirmed in the Indonesian press that none of the parties present in East Timor before 1975 will be permitted to stand (*Jakarta Post*, May 10 1986, quoting the official news agency *Antara*).

Carrascalao dissents

At a seminar held recently in Jakarta, just before the tenth anniversary of East Timor's 'integration', the Governor of the territory, Mario Carrascalao, located three main areas of concern. He described the Indonesian government's

transmigration policy as unpalatable, because of the resentment aroused by Javanese and Balinese migrants taking land from Timorese farmers. In some cases, he claimed, farmers whose land had been expropriated in this manner had "returned to the mountains" to support Fretilin.

Carrascalao also criticised the corruption practiced by Javanese officials in Dili. He claimed that as much as thirty to forty per cent of the state budget allocated for East Timor never reached its destination.

Finally, he described how his own authority as Governor was extremely limited. He concluded: "Everything is decided under the guidance of the military."

Xanana interview

In an interview published in *Third World* magazine (issue number 4, October-November 1986), Fretilin leader Xanana Gusmao has written about Fretilin's present perspectives on Portugal's role. "Considering that Portugal has effectively joined the European Community, Fretilin hopes that the Lisbon government will attempt more earnestly to persuade the European Community to review its stance where Jakarta is concerned. Portugal plays a major role in the solution of the East Timor question. Given the premise of a Portuguese political presence in East Timor for a transitional, indeterminate period of time, it is possible to envisage a set of conditions that will ensure the required mechanisms for establishing a multiparty constitutional system of government in the country, in line with the interests of both the area and the people of East Timor. In that event, Portugal would have honoured its responsibilities."

(In the same interview, Xanana Gusmao — who was replying in writing to a number of written questions from journalists — also comments about the situation within East Timor, Fretilin's support within Indonesia, the activities of the ICRC etc. Those interested should contact *Third World*, rua da Gloria 122, gr 105, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil. There is also a Spanish and a Portuguese edition of the magazine.)

Price Control

According to the *Jakarta Post* (9.8.86), coffee growers have been receiving unfair prices for their crop. Whereas coffee prices in Indonesia range from 2,000 to 4,000 rupiahs per kilo, farmers in East Timor are paid only 1,200 rupiahs for coffee of a very high quality. The trade is very tightly controlled by the local government, which obliges farmers to sell at this

price.

Other reports say that still lower prices are paid — as little as 4,000 rupiahs for 14-15 kilogram sacks.

The coffee is marketed through village co-operatives which are run by one of the trading companies controlled by the Indonesian military.

Conditions are such that many farmers are simply not bothering to produce coffee, in spite of military pressure on them to do so.

Students Appeal for Asylum

We reported in the last issue the request for asylum made on October 19 by four East Timorese students in Jakarta.

Though the four were still in Jakarta as we went to press, there is now much greater optimism that their case will be resolved. It is confidently hoped, by diplomats and also by the voluntary organisations which have been following the matter, that the Indonesian authorities will permit them to leave shortly.

It is understood that the Portuguese government has issued them with passports and air tickets. The Dutch Embassy in Jakarta has been acting as an intermediary for the Portuguese authorities.

(The Netherlands Embassy in Jakarta has represented Portuguese interests in Indonesia since East Timor was invaded in 1975. It was for this reason that the students approached the Dutch embassy to ask for asylum in the first instance.)

The students themselves — Antonino Goncalves, Freitas da Camara, Abilio Sereno and Fernandes Soares — are reported to be in relatively good spirits. They were nevertheless under considerable strain during November. During most of the time, they have had no physical diplomatic protection. Although they have been seen a number of times by Dutch Embassy officials, the four were asked to leave the Embassy in October, under an arrangement reached by the Dutch and Indonesian foreign ministers (both in Jakarta for an ASEAN-EEC meeting). Mr Mochtar guaranteed the students' security, and they were placed under the protection of the Rector of the Catholic University. For much of November the students stayed in private houses.

The fact that the outcome of their request was uncertain added to the anxiety. Senior officials and intelligence officers interviewed them several times, in an attempt to

persuade them to change their minds. Reportedly, they also received anonymous, threatening telephone calls.

These have now ceased. All the students need are exit visas, which it is now believed will be forthcoming, although the Indonesian authorities have taken an unusually long time to process them.

In the next issue we hope to be able to report that, after their ordeal of uncertainty, the four have finally arrived in Portugal.

A Paz e Possivel Reports

The latest issue of *A Paz e Possivel em Timor Leste* in Lisbon (October 1986) contains several items of news which we summarise here. Copies of the newsletter, in Portuguese and French, are available from Rua de Campolide 215-4 Dto, 1000 Lisbon.

Arrests in Atsabe: Mgr Belo is reported to have protested at the manner in which arrests were made in Atsabe during July. The church was entered by the military who arrested six young people there.

Ossu: Several dozen people are reported to have been arrested following guerrilla attacks against the military post in Ossu. *A Paz e Possivel* reports that 40 were picked up in Viqueque, of whom 18 were taken on to Dili. A further six were arrested in Dili itself. Three of these were subsequently released after church officials had intervened on their behalf. They had apparently been tortured.

Then, in June, some 15 people, including students were arrested in Ossu and taken to Baucau. *A Paz e Possivel* reports: "While the majority were tortured in the stockade at Baucau, the young girls (aged 14-15), stripped naked, were abused in all sorts of ways by the 'Red Berets' in the stockade yard."

Atauro: 112 prisoners originally from Viqueque are reported to have been released from Atauro in March.

Lospalos: Peasants living on the plain round Lospalos are reportedly being dispossessed of their land to make way for sugar plantations. *A Paz e Possivel* reports that the plantations are owned by Ali Moerdani, the brother of General Benni Moerdani, head of the Indonesian armed forces and commander of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975. A sugar processing factory is to be built near Lospalos.

Two Travellers

By Plane from Bali

Beginning from Ngurah Rai Airport in Denpasar, the travel documents (*Surat jalan*) for passengers to Dili are thoroughly checked by special officers from Udayana Military Command Bali. If anything regarded as doubtful is found in the travel document, the bearer will be held at Denpasar Airport. On arrival at Comoro Airport in Dili, all passengers are more thoroughly checked, and no-one allowed to leave the building until the officers are sure that his/her travel document has met all requirements. Each passenger (arriving or leaving) is carefully registered at Comoro Airport by the Security Operation Command in East Timor (KAS KOOPSKAM) in Dili.

Even to travel within East Timor, one has to go through a complicated procedure to get a travel document. To

travel outside the town of Dili, there are check posts where you must report and show your travel document. For example, on the way to Baucau (127 km) you have to pass and report at eight (8) checkpoints plus another post in the suburbs of Baucau. Travelling westward from Dili, there are fewer check posts.

(From the diary of a visitor, earlier this year.)

By road from West Timor

"I got on the regular microbus from Kupang that crosses the island and headed for Atambua near the border with East Timor on a trip that takes eight hours. It was 200 kilometers of steep roads with mountains and valleys along the way. The people on the bus said: "East Timor is even more mountainous"...

Darkness was descending when we arrived in Atambua. There was no hotel in this town of 12,000 people. I

looked for a (lodging house).

The lodging house owner said: "It's military regulations that foreigners are permitted to move about only within a five kilometer radius of the center of the town" Two days previous an English couple, tourists, were detained by the military because they went outside the town and were ordered to return to Kupang, he said.

Sure enough, the next morning, a man showed up at the lodging house who appeared to be a plainclothes security official and took me in to the regional command. After being asked a number of things by the military, I was ordered to leave immediately.

In front of the regional command, I saw the drivers of long distance buses bound for Dili, the capital of East Timor, getting travel permits. Even Indonesians must have the permission of the military to enter East Timor. My skin was prickling with the atmosphere of total military control in Atambua."

(Hamamoto, writing in *Yomiuri Shimbun*, September 11, 1986.)

CHURCH NEWS

PACIFIC CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES

At its most recent meeting in Western Samoa in September, the PCC — which represents all the major Pacific churches — adopted the following resolution:

"Being concerned about reports of human rights violations; believing that decolonisation calls for recognition of the inalienable rights of self-determination and self-rule; the Justice & Peace Group recommend that the Pacific Conference of Churches for the next five years:

- a. Continue to be a forum for expression of solidarity with and concern for the oppressed (be it in East Timor, in Irian Jaya, Australia, New Caledonia etc.);
- b. In supporting any independent movement in all the Pacific to address the issue of Protection of minority groups both before and after eventual independence.
- c. For the PCC member Churches to set aside an appropriate day of prayer and fasting at its discretion as an expression of solidarity in the struggle for justice, independence and peace; and
- d. For the PCC to send a message to the Indonesian Communion of Churches expressing concern for the East Timor situation because of:

1. The continuing violations of

human rights, including persecution of church leaders;

2. The continuing occupation of East Timor by military forces;

3. The need for co-operation called by the United Nations for peaceful solutions of the problem."

Conference of European Churches

The Ninth Conference of European Churches was held in Stirling, Scotland from September 4-11. Over 300 delegates attended.

Portugal was represented by the Methodist and the Evangelical Methodist Churches, the Lusitanian Church and the Presbyterian Church. As an expression of their concern, they circulated to all the delegates some documents about East Timor which had been prepared by the Portuguese Ecumenical Council. It is significant that the organising committee of the Conference authorised them to do this, though "purely for information".

Among the documents was a draft Resolution (translated here from the French):

Resolution from the Portuguese Ecumenical Council

"For various reasons, chief among which were incorrect information and the desire to be realistic, many governments and many churches have failed to take a clear stance on the problem of East Timor, the former Portuguese colony invaded by Indonesia in December 1975.

Eleven years after that invasion, it has to be recognised that the people of East Timor are still refusing to be integrated by force.

The Catholic church in the territory has demonstrated its opposition to what it calls the Indonesianisation of Timorese society and culture. The rapid increase of its influence among the Timorese people (from 30% in 1975 to 80% in 1985) shows that it has heard their heartfelt cry.

The constant testimonies reporting mass violations of human rights in East Timor, the appalling figure of 200,000 dead among a population of 700,000 presented by Amnesty International, make it incumbent on us to break the prudent silence that so many of us have preserved up till now.

We ask our churches to make known the facts of what can only be called in the true sense *genocide* since it does not confine itself to depriving large numbers of individual Timorese of their physical existence but strikes at their very existence as a society using a wide variety of means:

GERMANY

Some confusion, not to say controversy, has been stirred up recently by the publicity given in the Indonesian press to the visit of Father Rudiger Seifert, a Dominican priest who visited East Timor in December 1985. His subsequent comments about the situation in East Timor were very favourable to Indonesia. They became virtually the only source quoted by the Indonesian Ambassador to the UN, when he claimed before the United Nations that international opinion now admits the situation in East Timor is much better.

Father Seifert's report

A reader of *East Timor Link* has kindly sent us a translation of his report. It is indeed a contrast to most of the reports circulated by visitors. There is a sense of certainty — an absence of muddle and murk — about Fr. Seifert's impressions, which is at odds with the reaction of so many other visitors who have wrestled with the feeling that they cannot pin down the facts, discover what people are really thinking or establish any certain truth about the situation. Different things are said by different people; things are left unsaid; things are said without conviction.

In short, Father Rudiger's report is written with the confidence of someone who trusts his interlocutors. And this may well be the reason why he reaches conclusions which are different from so many independent observers — and why, unlike many private visitors, he has not hesitated to make his opinions widely and publicly known.

The trouble is that he listened to only two points of view — to officials of the administration and, to a lesser extent, to some members of the local clergy. The report makes clear that he was very generously received by the local government in East Timor. He was able to use the administration's helicopter, for example, and (unlike a Japanese journalist recently) had no difficulty in entering East Timor by road from Kupang. It is not, in fact, surprising that his relations should be so good. Fr Seifert was the chaplain to the German community in Jakarta for several years. During that time, he came to know many prominent Catholics, including General Moerdani.

Accepted Official Views

Unfortunately, he relates without many nuances what officials told him, and refers to the opinions of local

priests (such as Fr. Locatelli) only when these opinions coincide with those of the Indonesian government. He makes scarcely any reference that is not at second hand or derogatory about opposing points of view.

Such an approach leads him to emphasise some issues (the growth in schools) but to pass over many others on which it is more difficult for Indonesian officials to put a positive gloss. It also leads him to present some very questionable conclusions as virtually self-evident.

It is finally this reliance on official sources which makes his account unconvincing.

Certainly the German government and the Catholic authorities in Germany seem to have been embarrassed. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bonn felt it necessary to say that he did not speak in the name of the Federal Government, and the diocese of Cologne asked him not to visit East Timor again.

Fr Seifert's visit had not been sponsored by the church, but by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the political party to which he belongs.

Of Men and Mice: Verena Stern

Compared to an article in the normally responsible *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, however, Fr Seifert's report is a model of objectivity. The report by Verena Stern from Singapore on July 20 is a quite astonishing combination of innuendo, misrepresentation and error.

It is fascinating nonetheless for the miraculous powers which it attributes to Jose Ramos Horta, Fretilin's representative at the United Nations. Ramos-Horta is credited, single handed, with transforming Fretilin into a Marxist party before the invasion, and afterwards with inventing most if not all the reports coming out of Lisbon (and presumably New York as well) which are critical of Indonesia's record.

Savour the tone of the reporting from this extract. "For several years," Ms Stern writes, "running reports on life — or rather more appropriately, hunger, fighting and death — have been sent (from Lisbon) to journalists, magazines and newspapers all over the world (...) Contents and wording of the extracts from the letters (which are quoted) are identical from one year to the other — only the date of their posting in Dili... is brought up to date each time. And the name of the writer

— Concentration in strategic villages where they are deprived of their economic livelihood;

— Education in the language of the occupying power and stifling of their own culture;

— Enforced birth control while at the same time the state is encouraging migration to replace the Timorese population with Indonesians.

We ask our churches to bring influence to bear on their respective governments with a view to obtaining more decisive action on the part of the European governments, urging them to:

1. Condemn the military occupation, imprisonments on political grounds, torture, forced disappearances, and summary executions;

2. Demand a halt to any further plans for population migrations, enforced birth control, indonesianisation of education;

3. Call for a cease-fire and the opening of negotiations with the resistance movement;

4. Defend the rights of the Timorese people to express their will for self-determination;

5. Involve representatives of the Timorese people in the conversations being held between Portugal and Indonesia under the auspices of the United Nations;

6. Open the Timorese territory to the humanitarian agencies, organisations for the defence of human rights and observers from all sides."

No vote was taken on the resolution.

Asian Justice and Peace Movements

Asian Justice and Peace organisations held their regional meeting in November, in Hong Kong.

East Timor was on the agenda. Netherlands Justice and Peace, which hosted meetings on East Timor in each of the last two years for European Christian groups, was invited to attend and shared news of the work in Europe.

The meeting supported the commitment of Justice and Peace in both continents to the rights of the people of East Timor, and it is hoped that contact and co-operation between Asian and European Christian groups concerned by the issue will increase as a result of the meeting.

of the letters is naturally — for security reasons, of course — also kept secret.”

It only takes the work of one dedicated man to keep an international controversy alive for ten years! To keep top Indonesian officials and the army high command on the hop! And he recycles his correspondence from year to year!

What have we all been doing wrong?

Let us all watch out for Ms Stern's future writing. She has applied to go to East Timor early in 1987.

It will be her first visit.

Sweden and the Arms Trade

Sweden has the contradictory reputation: it is a country with one of the most liberal and non-aggressive political traditions in the world, which at the same time has one of the more energetic arms industries. This paradox is personified by Nobel — sponsor of the best known international peace prize, and arms manufacturer.

It is just this contradiction, perhaps, which explains why criticism of Sweden's arms trade with Indonesia earlier this year sparked off a major debate. Governments in the other countries of Europe, in contrast, are generally able to shrug off such criticisms.

Last winter, the issue was debated in Parliament, and it hit the headlines again when (guess who?) Jose Ramos-Horta visited Sweden in the Spring.

The Swedish East Timor group has just published a collection of news clippings about the controversy.

Ironically, one of the more sympathetic ministers in the Social Democratic government, Mr Mats Hellstrom, held the post of Minister of Foreign Trade and received the bulk of criticism. Eventually, he was forced out, even though, as the East Timor Committee concludes, “we believe he personally still wants the government to follow a policy more positive towards East Timor”.

Copies of the Committee's bulletin, including many press cuttings, can be had from Riddargaten 38, 2 Tr., 114 57 Stockholm, Sweden. Readers should note, however, that most of the documents are in Swedish — which is one reason why *East Timor Link* is itself unable to cover this issue more fully!

Mgr Lopes visits Japan

Mgr da Costa Lopes, the Apostolic Administrator of East Timor between 1978 and 1983, visited Japan in November, accompanied by Ms. Mimi Ferreira, an East Timorese refugee now living in Australia.

It was Mgr Lopes first major speaking visit to Japan. His trenchant criticisms of Indonesia's record in East Timor were reported in major Japanese dailies (*Asahi* and *Mainichi*, for example) and attracted sympathetic support at several public meetings in various urban centres.

The visit also coincided with the formation, on November 13, of a League of Diet Members on East Timor — bringing together some 65 Japanese parliamentarians concerned about the issue.

To coincide with the visit, the support groups in Japan published the first book in Japanese on the subject (a translation of Liem & Budiardjo *The War Against East Timor*). They now hope to build a longer-term campaign on the basis of this successful visit.

Belgium

Oxfam Belgique, which has long taken an interest in East Timor, wrote in March to the Belgian Prime Minister asking him to clarify his government's policy.

We publish extracts from the government's reply, signed by Mr Leo Tindemans, the Foreign Minister. Readers may wish to question some of Mr Tindemans' facts or conclusions. If you do write, send your letter to Le Ministre des Relations Exterieures, Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres, rue des Quatre-Bras 2, 1000 Bruxelles.

“Belgium, along with its European partners, attaches the greatest importance to respecting the principles contained in the Human Rights Declaration and the United Nations Charter, and undertakes to join them without hesitation in action designed to ensure they are respected. Like our European partners, Belgium is ready in the case of East Timor to support any solution that seeks to end the conflict and which would be acceptable to Portugal and Indonesia.

“The situation in East Timor and reports concerning human rights violations in the territory are questions which have been discussed many times by the ‘Ten’ within the context of European Political Cooperation.”

Mr Tindemans goes on to repeat the

standard European view that the matter is primarily a bilateral issue between Portugal and Indonesia, and that Belgium is following the talks sponsored by the UN with great interest. He then says that Dr Mochtar Kusumatmaaja, Indonesia's Foreign Minister, reassured him about human rights violations during his official visit to Belgium in January 1986, before proceeding to make several more questionable statements.

“The Portuguese government itself recognises that from a humanitarian point of view the situation in East Timor has improved.

“In this regard, in fact, one has seen the release of numerous political prisoners recently and the number of people classified as Fretilin sympathisers has fallen by three quarters. Moreover, since 1984 the International Red Cross has recommenced its work in the territory and for the first time has had access to various places where individuals captured during military operations are detained.”

(Translated from the French. the letter appears to be undated, but carries the reference: P/GEO 5.)

Portugal boycotts EEC-ASEAN Meeting

In October, Portugal — which recently joined the European Community — boycotted the meeting of EEC foreign ministers with their counterparts in ASEAN.

The meeting was held in Jakarta. In 1975, Portugal severed diplomatic relations with Indonesia, following the Indonesian government's decision to invade East Timor.

UK-Australian Parliamentary Delegation

Earlier this year, the Australian Parliamentary Human Rights Group and the British Parliamentary Human Rights Group asked to visit East Timor at the beginning of 1987.

Their request has been considered by the Indonesian government, which informed the Australians in October that a visit would not be opportune at that time, because it would coincide with the run-up to elections.

The British Parliamentary Human Rights Group has not yet been notified officially. However, Lord Avebury, speaking in London, said that both he and the Australian Parliamentary Human Rights Group take the view that the Indonesian refusal should not be interpreted as a blanket refusal, since it implies that a visit would be perfectly feasible after the elections have been completed.

Mr Robert Tickner, on behalf of the Australian PHRG, has already written to the Indonesian Ambassador asking him to confirm his request to send a delegation of two parliamentarians from each country to East Timor after the elections.

Fiji Conference

The August issue of CISET Newsletter reports on the United Nations Symposium on Ethnicity, Diversity and

Nation Building in the Pacific. It was attended by Abel Guterres, who spoke about East Timor.

The Conference was sponsored by the University of the South Pacific. There were participants from universities in Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Canada, Mexico, Hawaii and Fiji itself.

FUNU

The Red Sea Press have recently published an autobiographical book by Jose Ramos-Horta: *Funu — The Unfinished Saga of East Timor*.

Noam Chomsky has written the preface for it.

It is available from 55 Bellevue Avenue, Trenton, New Jersey 08618. In cloth US\$19.5, in paperback US\$7.75 plus US\$1.50 for postage (US\$8.00 airmail outside the United States or US\$3.00 seairmail.)

SUBSCRIPTIONS

SUBSCRIPTIONS APPEAL

In view of our increasing costs, and the growing number of our overseas readers, we are asking for an increased voluntary subscription from the beginning of 1987.

If you could contribute at least £5.00, this would help us cover the relatively high costs of producing a newsletter with a small but international circulation. Over a quarter of our readers are in Asia, and contributions this year did not even cover the costs of postage.

For two years, we have distributed *East Timor Link* without charge, and have asked readers to make a voluntary contribution.

I am sure all would agree that such an arrangement cannot be maintained indefinitely.

Many of our readers are organisations, or individuals living in

Europe, North America or Canada who can well afford the small sums involved.

If you enjoy *East Timor Link*, and believe it should continue, please let us know.

And please contribute if you can.

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