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International support has rallied behind Bishop Belo following a spate of violent confrontations in June and July between East Timorese Catholics and the Indonesian military. But there are widespread fears that religious tensions are being deliberately manipulated to weaken the church in East Timor.

Tensions between the Indonesian military and East Timorese brewed during June and July into the most violent clashes seen since the Santa Cruz massacre of November 1991. Revolving around the church, the clashes highlighted the fact that religious conflict is increasingly becoming the outward expression of underlying political friction in the territory.

The incidents were followed by military intervention and arrests. On 17 July, Bishop Belo described East Timor to Reuters as 'a hell, where Christians are constantly being arrested, beaten and intimidated by police'. This interview took place on the eve of the eighteenth anniversary of Indonesia's annexation of East Timor.

The first clash occurred in the village of Remexio on 28 June, after three Indonesian soldiers receiving holy communion at the church of Sao José spat out the host and trod it underfoot. Greatly offended by the desecration, East Timorese Catholics beat up the soldiers, who said they had acted on the orders of their superiors.

On 12 July, a 350-strong demonstration marched through the streets to the governor's office to register their protest. They demanded of vice governor Brigadier General Johanes Haribowo that catholicism, the religion of the majority of Timorese, be respected and that freedom of religious worship be guaranteed.

The sensitive nature of the incident was wide-



East Timorese catholics leaving mass in Letefoho, East Timor

CIIR

ly acknowledged and the desecration condemned by muslim as well as christian authorities. On 16 July the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Council of Islamic Scholars in Indonesia) expressed concern over the desecration and urged muslims to refrain from actions that would undermine religious harmony in East Timor (UCANEWS 776/A).

Bishop Belo wrote a letter of protest to the provincial and central government representatives, and asked that the soldiers stand trial. He called for special masses and benedictions to be held and advised non-catholic Indonesians not to attend masses.

The desecration was also condemned by East Timorese governor, Abilio José Osorio Soares,

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This issue of *Timor Link* reports on the international reaction to recent attacks on church personnel in East Timor and investigates some of the causes of the rising religious tensions, including Indonesia's attempted islamisation of the territory. Jill Jolliffe explains why she believes solidarity groups have been over-hasty in dismissing the 'reconciliation talks' and demands a re-appraisal. We also report on a chink of light opening in the UN-sponsored negotiations in Geneva, and on the success against all the odds of the Asia-Pacific Conference on East Timor.

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who supported the view that the soldiers should stand trial.

Attack on nuns

In a second incident, two religious sisters attending the University of East Timor on 13 July to take entrance exams were taunted by men who turned out to be Indonesian intelligence agents. One of the nuns was asked whether she would like to become pregnant.

The incident prompted a protest march by 500 students the following day, which was broken up by security forces. Two hundred students occupied the university. In the resulting scuffles, there were numerous arrests, large numbers of youths were reportedly injured and some taken to hospital. It is unclear, at present, whether anyone was killed.

Caught in the middle as always, Bishop Belo condemned both the Indonesian military violence and the reaction of the youths who demonstrated, admonishing them for parading the papal flag at the protest rally. José Ramos Horta, leader of the National Council of Maubere Resistance (CNRM), accused the Indonesian authorities of 'a deliberate manoeuvre to change the East Timorese conflict into a religious conflict'.

Islamisation

The clashes reflect the mounting religious tension in East Timor, to which Bishop Belo has referred in recent interviews.

Under the Indonesian Pancasila doctrine, which requires adherence to one of five world religions, East Timor is officially a multi-faith society. Roman Catholics account for more than 80 per cent of the population. Yet Islam is on the increase – as large numbers of Muslims from Java and neighbouring islands pour into East

Timor under government incentive schemes – and mosques have been springing up throughout the territory.

For most East Timorese Catholics, Islam is the religion of the occupiers and therefore a symbol of the oppressor. East Timorese have demonstrated their rejection of both by joining the Catholic church. The result is a volatile cocktail of ethnic tensions superimposed with religious friction.

The situation is exacerbated by two factors. The first is the perception among Catholics that the Indonesian government is backing attempts to Islamise the East Timorese. Incentives have reportedly been offered to young East Timorese to become Muslims and Bishop Belo has said groups of young people have been taken away to Muslim schools in Java. Others have been offered material rewards for attending mosques, which have been appearing in Catholic areas.

The second source of tension are reports of attempts by the military to undermine the standing of the local East Timorese Catholic clergy. They have frequently been the victims of disinformation and false accusations organised by the military and their East Timorese informers and co-operants. The Bishop himself has not escaped this intrusive interference in the internal working of the diocese and has expressed his deep sadness at the consequences for himself (*Timor Link* No.28, pages 7-8).

Bishop Belo therefore attaches great importance to the building of a new seminary in East Timor for training priests and lay catechists. This is intended to strengthen what he sees as East Timor's cultural and religious inheritance, especially the former colonial language and the lingua franca – Portuguese and Tetum respectively – which are all but banned.

International response

Supportive statements came from a number of foreign Catholic bishops' conferences after the latest incidents.

The US Catholic Bishops' Conference issued a statement on 26 July, expressing their 'special bond' with the East Timorese people based on their 'shared Catholic faith'. The American bishops spoke of their admiration for the bravery of the East Timorese in the face of the 'harsh and often violent treatment of their Indonesian overseers'.

They urged the United Nations to take more vigorous action to solve East Timor's disputed status. 'The mechanism that is already in place, namely the ministerial meetings between the governments of Indonesia and Portugal under the auspices of the United Nations, is the appropriate vehicle to advance the negotiations,' said the statement. They appealed to the UN secretary general to instil more urgency in this process, and called for new initiatives to resolve the political crisis and improve human rights. Recognising the different approaches and proposals existing for resolving the impasse, the bishops called for an 'end to the kind of political and even religious persecution and violation of human rights that continue to plague that tortured community'. The bishops' concern did much to encourage the US government to continue the ban of military training aid to the Indonesian government (see page 6).

The head of the Catholic church in Australia, Cardinal Edward Clancy, also spoke out about East Timor, warning his government on 23 July that Australians should 'show as much concern about the abuse of human rights in East Timor as we have seen in [the case of] Vietnam and China'. Cardinal Clancy is not renowned for speaking out about justice issues.

The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales also sent a message of support to Bishop Belo on 19 July following the recent attacks on church personnel. Bishop Patrick Kelly, chairman of the Committee for International Justice and Peace assured Bishop Belo that 'we are doing what we can to press our government to place the principles of justice and peace above those of short-term economic gain, and urge the Indonesian authorities to cease their violent oppression of your people'. ■

A people's resistance

Journalist and author HUGH O'SHAUGHNESSY identifies the emergence of a generation of well-educated East Timorese that is forming an articulate opposition to the Indonesian occupation.

The events of the past few weeks and the protests they drew have underlined the importance of a new factor in East Timor, the emergence of an educated stratum of Timorese.

Benefiting from the facilities provided by the Indonesian occupiers as part of their attempt to 'modernise' East Timor, young men and women have reached levels of intellectual training they would never have enjoyed in the past. To attain such education they had to have recourse to a language which is not their own and they suffer from the refusal of the occupiers to teach them anything of their own cultural background. The process leaves them with a shaky hold on their own identity, and this insecurity is worsened by the shortage of opportunities in the job market.

They compensate for this to some extent by using Tetum as their national language and badge of patriotism. A number of pop singers have adopted Tetum, and cassettes such as

those of Tonny Pereira, a native of Flores, are popular.

The result is the emergence of a generation of Timorese who are increasingly coherent in their hostility to the occupation and who reject the choice offered to their elders of either joining the guerrillas in the mountains or going into exile. Many young Timorese are prepared to stand their ground and challenge the Indonesian occupation at home.

Their commitment is admired and backed by a sprinkling of Indonesians calling for greater freedoms in their own country and who have been ashamed by what Suharto's government has been doing in their name in East Timor.

With the migration and the pressure on Christianity, political life in occupied East Timor is becoming complicated. There is certainly more suffering in store for the East Timorese before they get the self-determination they desire. But the tide of politics is undoubtedly running with them.

A version of this article was first published in The Tablet, 13 August 1994

Drawing down the veil: Christian-Islam tensions

HUGH O'SHAUGHNESSY traces Indonesia's programme to assert its authority in East Timor through religious hegemony and the resultant tensions between Christians and Muslims.

Since shortly after the invasion in 1975, the Indonesians have been determined to absorb the 700,000 Timorese into their huge popula-

tion, which stands today at 190 million and is predominantly muslim.

The principle instrument to achieve this has been the dispatch of more than 100,000 Indonesians to East Timor, where the Suharto government has settled them on the best Timorese land and given them the best jobs.

The result has been that the Timorese are beginning to feel themselves strangers in their native land. And all the more so because the mass immigration has been accompanied by a process of islamisation.

All government secondary schools in East Timor are staffed exclusively by muslims, despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of the pupils are catholic. In the towns and villages the officers in command of the occupying forces, men whom the Timorese have very good reason to fear, have been pushing for the establishment of mosques.

Bishop Belo recounted how the Indonesians try to force the Timorese to convert either to Islam or to Protestantism threatening those who do not that they will be regarded as 'Communists'.

'In Aileu,' said Belo, 'the military commanders and police commanders formed an association called Panitia to build a mosque. They then became leaders of this association.'

Fr Domingos Soares, parish priest of Letefoho, told me that muslim traders wander round the villages or set up small shops and extend generous credit to villagers. When they have borrowed more money than they can pay back, the muslim trader gives them three options. 'Either they make over their land to him,' says Fr Soares, 'or they become muslims, or the trader reports them to the police.'

The evidence of an increased islamic presence is obvious in Dili's streets. Some school-girls are going round with veils over their hair and the Koran is on sale in shops for the first time. At the airport, there is a prayer room for muslims, although no chapel for the catholics who are the big majority of the population.

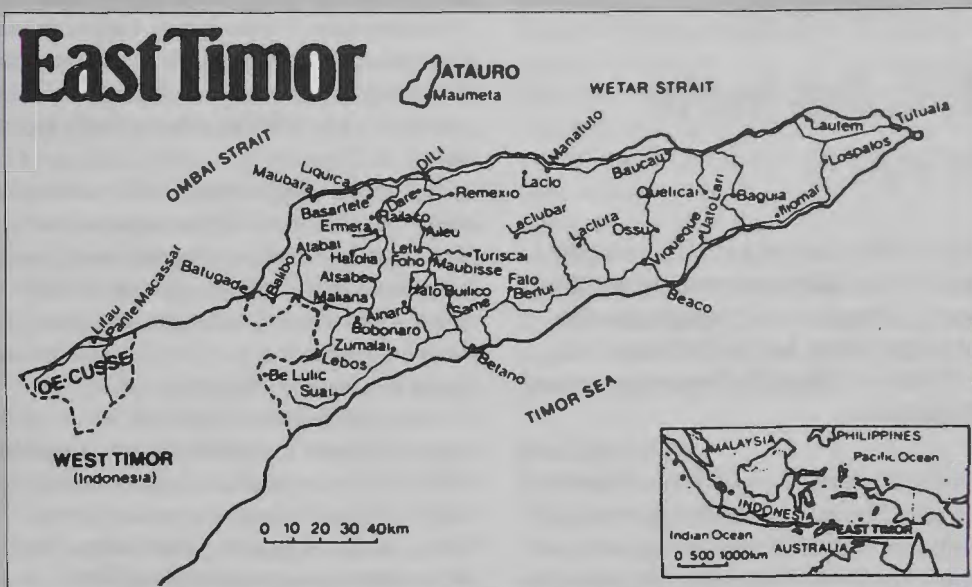
Belo's diocese targeted

The Suharto regime is meanwhile trying an out-flanking movement on Bishop Belo. The bishop reported last month that there had been a ministerial meeting in Jakarta to consider again the old question of splitting into two or three parts the large diocese of Dili, of which he is the administrator.

Belo himself would be relegated to the town of Baucau and perhaps an Indonesian brought in to take his place, a situation which would alarm and possibly split the catholic community.

So far, the Holy See, worrying more about the situation in Indonesia, has been less than wholehearted in its support for Belo. The bishop says pointedly: 'We hope the Vatican will understand these problems, the seriousness of the situation.' ■

This article was first published in The Catholic Herald, 26 August 1994



EAST TIMOR: Time for change

Timor, area 7,400 square miles, is one of the easternmost islands of the Indonesian archipelago and lies 300 miles north of Australia, its nearest neighbour. The western part of the island, formerly a Dutch colony, belongs to Indonesia, whereas East Timor was for more than 400 years a Portuguese colony.

In 1974 Portugal decolonised East Timor, whose newly formed political parties began discussing options for the future – federation with Portugal, independence, or integration with Indonesia. The Timorese Democratic Union (UDT) initially favoured the first option but then joined a coalition with the nationalist liberation movement, Fretilin, to demand independence. A small third party, Apodeti, was used as a vehicle for Indonesian propaganda in favour of integration.

On 11 August 1975 the UDT staged a coup to pre-empt Indonesian threats to intervene if Fretilin came to power. In the ensuing civil war, 1,500 people lost their lives. By September 1975, however, Fretilin was in control of virtually all of Portuguese Timor, following the defection of Timorese colonial troops to the liberation movement's side.

Indonesia, like the United States, was worried by the proximity of an independent state with radical policies and continued to threaten East Timor, despite previous assurances that Jakarta would respect the right of the East Timorese to independence. In September 1975 Indonesia closed West Timor to journalists and on 7 December it launched a full-scale invasion of East Timor with the knowledge of the United States and the encouragement of Australia. East Timor was proclaimed the '27th province' of Indonesia.

The invasion and annexation of East Timor has been brutal: up to 200,000 people, a third of the population, have died as a result of Indonesian rule. But the majority of Timorese have not accepted subjugation: Indonesia has been unable to eliminate the desire of the East Timorese for self-determination

and an armed resistance movement still remains in the hills.

Although the invasion has been condemned by successive UN resolutions, the international community has done little or nothing to implement them, given the major economic and geopolitical interests of the United States, Japan and particularly Australia in the region. Indonesia's crucial strategic location and regional status – it has the world's fifth largest population, and large reserves of oil and other natural resources – have all encouraged the world to downplay East Timor's agony.

In recent years, however, several events have combined to break East Timor's isolation and bring its continued occupation to international attention. In 1989 the Pope visited the territory and in 1991 the planned visit of a parliamentary delegation from Portugal, still considered the administering authority of East Timor by the UN, created huge expectations of change. To great disappointment in East Timor, the delegation was forced in October 1991 to call off its visit.

On 12 November 1991 Indonesian troops shot and killed up to 300 East Timorese civilians during a funeral procession held at the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili, the East Timorese capital, for a victim of repression. Witnessed by foreign journalists, the Santa Cruz massacre provided indisputable evidence of Indonesian atrocities.

The Santa Cruz massacre has forced governments around the world to criticise Indonesia's brutality, injecting new impetus into diplomatic efforts to bring about a solution to East Timor's suffering. Since 1983 the UN Secretary-General has been entrusted with the achievement of a settlement to the dispute; and with the post-Cold War era providing a new international climate for negotiations, Indonesia faces increased pressure to reach a solution with Portugal and the East Timorese under the auspices of the UN.

DIPLOMATIC NEWS

UN talks inch forward

Although advancing at a snail's pace, the latest round of UN-sponsored negotiations between Indonesia and Portugal saw the Indonesians admit for the first time that they should be talking to Timorese opposed to integration.

The fourth round of talks between the Indonesian and Portuguese foreign ministers under the auspices of the UN secretary general took place in Geneva on 6 May. Despite mutual accusations of intractability beforehand, there is at least a glimmer of hope that the meeting might not have been entirely fruitless.

The series of talks has focused on confidence-building measures to be taken by both sides as a preliminary to discussion of the substantive issues. The Indonesian government cites as evidence of its good will the fact that it allowed a delegation of journalists into Dili in April. The government has also put on record its willingness to enter dialogue with Amnesty International.

The UN secretary general met foreign ministers Durao Barroso of Portugal and Ali Alatas of Indonesia separately, and then chaired a joint meeting between them. His statement afterwards contained one significant move forward. Point 9 read: 'The Foreign Ministers of Portugal and Indonesia informed the secretary general of their readiness to meet with leading East Timorese supporters and opponents of integration respectively'. This is the first time Indonesia has publicly acknowledged the need, within this process, to consult the East Timorese.

Behind the scenes at the United Nations, some officials at least are thought to be prepared to take the question of East Timor seriously. Bishop Belo reported in an interview with John Pilger in mid June that – albeit five years late – he had at last received a reply to his letter of 1989 to the UN secretary general. And a considerable amount of consultation went on prior to this latest round of talks, with UN missions being dispatched to Lisbon, Jakarta, Dili and Sydney for preparatory discussions. Jakarta allowed the UN special rapporteur on extra-judicial killings, Bacré Waly N'Diaye of Senegal to visit East Timor from 7-11 July, suggesting there is some slow progress towards a more open attitude.

Indonesia promises documents

The UN Special Rapporteur on Extra-Judicial and Arbitrary Executions concluded his visit to East Timor on 11 July. At a press conference he said the Indonesian government had promised him all requested documents relating to the Santa Cruz massacre. In a consensus dec-

laration read out by the chairman of the UN Commission on Human Rights, the Indonesian government agreed to facilitate visits of other thematic rapporteurs as well as the working groups on arbitrary detention and disappearances.

The Special Rapporteur's brief was to evaluate the manner in which the inquiry about the Santa Cruz massacre is being conducted by the Indonesian authorities. He was aware of the evidence that a second massacre took place, but neither confirmed nor denied whether he would investigate this also.

A group of inmates in Becora prison, Dili – the same group imprisoned since November 1991, who demonstrated in front of visiting journalists in April – were moved to Semarang Prison in central Java two weeks before the special rapporteur's scheduled visit. The six were Gregorio da Cunha Saldanha, Francisco Miranda Branco, Saturnino da Costa Belo, Jacinto das Neves Raimundo Alves, Juvencio de Jesus Martins, and Filomeno da Silva Pereira.

Petitions to the United Nations

A large number of NGOs, human rights organisations, solidarity groups and individuals presented petitions on East Timor to the UN Special Committee on the Situation to the Implementation of the Declaration of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples on 13-14 August in New York.

A significant newcomer was Maureen Tolfree, the sister of British journalist Brian Peters who was killed in Balibo shortly before the Indonesian invasion. Mrs Tolfree had contacted East Timor activists after hearing an interview on Bristol local radio.

Her testimony is an indictment of the British government, which at the time did its best to deflect uncomfortable questions. It is also a moving contribution from someone who has been kept in the dark about the events and the political context of her brother's death in 1975. Here are the last two paragraphs of her petition:

'So why am I here? What do I want? Many things. I want you to call for the people of East Timor to have an internationally supervised referendum on their future. I want governments, including my own, to stop lying about East Timor. I want to know why my brother and his colleagues are buried in Jakarta. I want their bodies to be re-buried in East Timor or Australia, as their surviving relatives want.

'I want a properly conducted investigation into the deaths of the five journalists. But most of all, I want everything possible to be done for the people of East Timor. I'm a hundred per cent sure that this is what Brian would have wanted.'

Other new petitioners to the committee, spurred on by the recent Asia Pacific Conference on East Timor, included representatives for the Asia Pacific Coalition on East Timor (APCET) (see page 5) and Philippine Solidar-

ity for East Timor and Indonesia (PSETI), as well as church organisations such as Pax Christi International, and the Japanese Catholic Council for Justice & Peace.

CIIR's petition this year focused on the continuing harassment of church personnel (see pages 1-2) and Bishop Belo's revelation of two attempts on his life. ■

The London talks: a second opinion

JILL JOLLIFFE, a journalist and author of several books on East Timor, calls for a more positive assessment of the London talks, than we gave in *Timor Link* in December 1993. She argues that the initiative should be given a chance, and castigates solidarity groups for unhelpful interference, characterised by the hostile reception that greeted Indonesia's special ambassador for East Timor affairs at Lisbon airport in May. Here we print an edited version of Jolliffe's article from the Portuguese daily *Publico* of 13 May.

The spectacle of Timorese fighting Timorese at Lisbon airport was ugly and depressing, but the involvement of Portuguese citizens made it even more so.

When I published my second book, *Timor, Terra Sangrenta* in 1989, I argued that the issue was not between Portugal and Indonesia, but one of human rights, to be pursued in a disinterested fashion. It was important to stress this, given the danger that, if the conflict was seen as one of offended Portuguese honour, the rights of the East Timorese would inevitably be relegated to second place, and eventually forgotten, as they were in Portugal between 1975 and 1980.

Unfortunately that process is now underway. When Portuguese demonstrators involved themselves in an attack against Francisco Lopez da Cruz [Indonesia's special ambassador on East Timor], their banners might as well have read: 'Timor e nosso'. The Timor cause in Portugal is rapidly being converted into a state-sponsored chauvinist campaign, reminiscent of Morocco's 1975 patriotic 'green march' against the Saharawis.

The demonstrators were a mirror-image of those military extremists in Jakarta responsible for the Santa Cruz massacre, who must indeed have rejoiced at the headlines in Jakarta newspapers telling of Lopez da Cruz's treatment. They provided fuel for those opposed to concessions by Jakarta or the search for middle ground for a diplomatic settlement.

No wonder that, despite government avowals to champion Timorese interests, UN negotiations have become a sterile ritual, in which the Portuguese minister, Dr José Durao Barroso, mouths a few politically-correct phrases and then agrees to meet the Indonesian minister again eight months hence, without a hint of urgency, probably to repeat the same ritual then.

Righteous foot-stamping to demonstrate Portugal's rectitude to the world will not bring peace to East Timor, nor does it constitute a foreign policy. Yet with a little imagination and flexibility, Portugal could make significant advances: if not to achieve a peace agreement then to win practical improvements in Timor towards that end.

The Geneva talks on 6 May illustrated the point. Indonesian sources say an offer had previously been made to Portugal to open a special interests section in another embassy in Jakarta. Special interest sections are an established tradition, allowing a country representation without giving diplomatic recognition. The United States has such a deal in Havana. Under the offer, Portugal could open a Jakarta office, and Portuguese diplomats could travel regularly to East Timor to monitor the human rights situation. Portugal refused.

The initiative resurfaced in new clothes in Geneva as part of a quid pro quo suggested by Boutros Ghali, but apparently drafted by the Portuguese government with Timorese leader José Ramos Horta. The stakes had been raised: Portugal would open a special interests section in Jakarta if Jakarta allowed a UN human rights monitoring office to be set up in Jakarta. Jakarta refused and Ramos Horta fumed.

Primitive policy

Who has the moral authority to refuse significant concessions by Jakarta when East Timorese are still dying, and when concessions have not been made for most of the past nine years? It is far from a question of capitulating to Indonesia – surely Indonesia should be encouraged, not rebuffed, when it offers the slightest concession?

In the light of the Portuguese government's failure to condemn the act unequivocally at the time it happened, did the bucket of manure tipped on Lopez da Cruz symbolise the primitive nature of Portuguese foreign policy today – to tip the bucket on Jakarta and feel righteous in the eyes of the world?

If these words seem harsh it is not because I wish to aggravate conflict dividing Timorese – in which, unhappily, non-Timorese are playing an increasing role. Nor do I intend to offend those Timorese who I know acted from the pain and rage of personal suffering – I have friends on both sides of the divide who I know act from conscientious belief. Rather, my words are an appeal for toleration and reflection.

There are those in both Jakarta and Lisbon interested in prolonging the war, when the signs are that, with skilful diplomacy, peace may be obtainable in the short or medium term.

All wars end in negotiations with the enemy. But when in 1983, before he was fashionable, Xanana Gusmão opened peace talks with Indonesian officers and negotiated a ceasefire, the initiative was given only ambiguous support by solidarity groups. The ceasefire, which depended on alerting strong international support, broke down after only three months, and the war continued for more than a decade. Some solidarity groups have become, unconsciously or not, war junkies. As one East Timorese put it,

'they have become businesses and we are the raw materials'.

It is time for non-Timorese to step back, listen with humility to Timorese opinions, and let the Timorese breathe a little. Give peace a chance.

I honestly don't know if 'reconciliation' is an Indonesian political trick. I do know it has been falsely represented in Portugal and abroad, particularly by solidarity groups. And I do know that there are signs of a perestroika in Indonesia and that we owe it to those in Timor to explore any chance of peace.

Portugal has contributed a great deal in recent years. Please, Dr Durao Barroso, apply to the negotiations the skills you used in your admirable negotiation of Angola's Bicesse Peace accord to the Timor case – not the defects of the post-Bicesse period. We don't want the errors of Portugal's 1975 decolonisation repeated in Timor too. ■

** Timor e nosso ('Timor is ours') echoing a slogan promoted by the Salazar dictatorship against challenges to its colonial empire.*

Governments bungle conference on Timor

Over-reaction on the part of the Indonesian government and mishandling by the Philippines government, transformed the Asia Pacific Conference on East Timor (APCET) in Manila from a relatively low-key event into a major diplomatic controversy, and a long-running front-page news story. CATHERINE SCOTT was there.

Had the Indonesian government ignored the APCET, it would have 'gone away'. But such was the sensitivity of a fellow ASEAN country permitting a conference about East Timor to take place on its soil – even if privately organised – that for a while relations between Indonesia and the Philippines were severely strained.

The Philippines government knew months in advance the plans of Mr RC Constantino, chair of the convenors group, and his colleagues. Everything had been handled openly. But a senior official at the Indonesian Embassy in Manila made it known that President Suharto would like it stopped. Exchanges ensued between Constantino and the Philippines foreign affairs ministry. Constantino refused to cancel the conference – it would go on, but the organisers would naturally make sure that all shades of East Timorese opinion, from pro-independence to pro-integration with Indonesia, would be given due hearing. The Indonesian embassy was invited to submit a list of those they would like to attend. Four names were put forward. One of them had already been invited and had registered for the conference anyway.

The administration of President Fidel Ramos apologised to Jakarta for any offence, but said it would contravene the Philippines constitution to

ban a private NGO conference.

Indonesia was not placated. Three hundred Indonesian businessmen due to attend a conference in Davao City, Mindanao, announced their withdrawal, incurring millions of pesos worth of lost revenue for the Filipino hosting organisations. Dozens of Filipino fishermen were arrested in Indonesian waters. There were doubts whether Indonesia would continue to broker peace talks between the Philippines government and the Moro peoples in Mindanao. Indonesian investment worth several hundred million dollars could be jeopardised.

Trading names

President Ramos began to cave in. On 20 May, a blacklist was published containing the names of eight people, including all the East Timorese political leaders in exile, as well as a number of prominent activists. The list was, clearly, handed over by Indonesian intelligence and it contained names of people not even intending to attend the conference. But the Philippines government announced that they would not be admitted because they were political agitators who would use Filipino soil to blacken the reputation of the government of a friendly neighbour.

The convenors countered by announcing the names of prominent conferees expected, such as the Nobel Laureate, Mairead Maguire from Northern Ireland, Bishop Hilton Deakin from Australia and Bishop Aloisius Soma of Japan. Danielle Mitterand had originally accepted an invitation and then given way to Indonesian pressure not to attend. The government responded by saying that all foreigners would be banned from the conference. The convenors stood firm. The conference would go ahead. On 29 May it was announced that a temporary restraining order had been issued by a Quezón city court. This would stop the conference for 20 days, after which a hearing could take place.

The same day Mairead Maguire and Tom Hyland of the East Timor Ireland Solidarity Campaign were summarily deported on arrival at Ninoy Aquino international airport. Over the next few days no fewer than 14 people suspected of trying to come to the APCET would meet the same fate. Not all were guilty.

The 'banned' list had grown in the meantime and now carried the names of several Bishops, one of whom – Bishop Finnau of Tonga – had died six months previously. Indonesian pressure led Pakistani airlines to refuse to allow Bishop Soma of Japan to board one of their planes.

Cardinal Sin sent a letter of support (see box, page 6) to Bishop Belo, denouncing his own government for the mishandling of the affair, and adding to the pressure on president Ramos.

Appeasement

Meanwhile, the press was tearing the government apart for its mishandling of the situation and for caving in to Indonesian pressure. Crucial issues were at stake – such as the Philippines constitution, academic freedom, freedom of expression. For some it seemed that everything that had been achieved when the people ousted the Marcos dictatorship was about to be over-

thrown for the sake of appeasing a bullying neighbour. Ramos was slated for kowtowing to Suharto.

Meanwhile, the restraining order was to be challenged in the supreme court by APCET lawyers. Foreigners who had managed to get through the cordon at the airport began to wonder what would happen if they did try to attend the conference.

On 31 May, two hours before the conference was due to begin, the supreme court overturned the temporary restraining order. The ban on the conference was lifted and Filipinos could now attend. Foreigners, however, were still barred.

People power

As the conference opened, 'people power' re-emerged on the campus of the University of the Philippines. The 25-or-so foreigner participants gathered at their campus hostel and, surrounded by a double cordon of hundreds of Filipinos who swarmed to protect us, we walked to the law faculty where the conference was due to be formally opened. Hemmed in by priests, nuns, monks, housewives, law students, many veterans of the 1986 uprising, we were safe from lurking policemen. There were as many press people as body guards, for by this time the APCET had become a cause celebre all over

the region. We were watched on TV that night by millions across the region being welcomed in the words of RC Constantino in 'the warm embrace of free Filipinos, not to the twenty-eighth province of Indonesia'.

Bishop Soma finally arrived on 2 June and at the university chapel appealed in a powerful sermon to APCET delegates to continue to work for human rights. Speaking movingly of his recent visit to East Timor, he quoted the beatitudes: 'Blessed are those who work for justice. The people of East Timor are working for justice, fighting for their rights and they are blessed. We at APCET can join in their struggle. God is raising up people everywhere to walk alongside the East Timorese. Those who work for East Timor are doing God's work. In 1989 Bishop Belo wrote that the world has forgotten East Timor. Let us show that it is not true'.

The APCET occupied the front page of newspapers in the Philippines well after the conference had finished. Thanks to the governments of the Philippines and Indonesia, many more Filipinos now know about East Timor. The APCET has become the Asia Pacific Coalition on East Timor, with Bishop Soma its honorary president. A strong Filipino and Asian network has been set up to continue education and advocacy work on in the region. East Timor has become an ASEAN issue. ■

Cardinal Sin's letter to Bishop Belo — an extract

'Your Excellency: I am writing to you as a brother in the faith and in the episcopal service. I know how much your people have suffered all these years on account of the illegal Indonesian occupation of East Timor. I know that this has resulted in abominable human rights violations inflicted upon your flock. Our faith tells us that it is Christ who suffers every time human rights are trampled upon. It is Christ who suffers every time freedom is shamelessly usurped.

I am sorely disappointed with the decision of the Philippines government to deport Nobel Prize winner Mairead Maguire and all those who wanted to attend a conference in Manila on East Timor. I am sorry to see the political leaders of my own nation giving in to pressure of a foreign nation. The decision to stop the conference is nothing less than foolish.

We ourselves were once a suffering people on account of a dictatorial government. Our own leaders came to power using the ways of peace and non-violence. I am distressed that our leaders have so easily forgotten that the best way to express to God our gratitude for our new-found freedom is to help those who are still suffering to gain theirs. How short is our memory and how thoughtless we could become only a few years after our own liberation... I apologise for the ineptitude of my political leaders to spearhead the growth of freedom and dignity in our region.'

INTERNATIONAL ROUND-UP

INDONESIA

Trade union banned

The Indonesia Prosperous Labour Union (SBSI), a free trade union never recognised by the government, was banned in June. The government recognises only the SPSI, a 'yellow' union, which it controls.

The ban follows several weeks of labour unrest in central Java and Northern Sumatra in April. A march in Medan protested the suspicious death of a young worker named Rusli. The death was followed by a lay-off of 400 workers at the factory where he worked. Strikers also demanded freedom of association and a wage increase. Workers in Medan's many factories earn less than £1 a day.

The strikers presented their demands to middle-ranking army officials, but the march was broken up by riot police. Unrest continued for several days, with heavy army intervention and many arrests. Eighty-four people are to stand trial on charges of vandalism and incitement, among them SBSI leaders from the Medan branch.

Military intervention in labour disputes in Indonesia is commonplace, and an end to this is one of the reforms which the US government has required pending a decision on renewal of trade advantages under its General System of Preferences.

... Followed by press bans

Three weekly newspapers with combined circulation of more than 500,000 were closed down by the Indonesian government on 20 June. The closure of *Tempo*, *Editor*, and *DeTik* caused a storm of protest in Indonesia, and is widely believed to have been in response to their critical coverage of the government's decision to buy 39 warships that belonged to the former East German navy. The coverage had exposed discord between various ministers and military officials involved in arms procurement.

The closures were accompanied by warnings to other newspapers of the price of embarrassing the government. However, the bans have stimulated considerable activity among opponents and new movements are forming among journalists and activists to fight back. Big protest marches that followed the closures were violently suppressed by the army.

AID

US stops small arms sales to Indonesia

The 1995 US foreign aid bill was passed by the Senate on 10 August. The US\$13.7 billion bill, which merges drafts from the Senate and the House of Representatives, bans the transfer or sale of small arms and crowd-control equipment to Indonesia and the use of aid monies to enrol Indonesian officers in US military training programmes.

Approval for the ban was boosted by concern among Catholics in the US over the subsequent attacks on nuns and desecrations by Indonesian military in East Timor. The US Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the US Catholic Bishops, wrote to the House subcommittee on foreign relations on 22 July strongly supporting continuation of the ban.

The Senate committee approving foreign aid appropriations in June had wanted to prohibit the use of all lethal US military equipment, but was undermined by the pro-Indonesia lobby led by Senator Bennett Johnson (D-LA). The committee was also opposed by the US administration fearful of threatening a potential market for US products in advance of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Indonesia this November. President Clinton is expected to attend the opening session.

A *New York Times* editorial on 13 August — another in a series highly critical of Indonesia — connected the recent violence in East Timor with the ban on small arms and crowd-control equipment. The NYT slammed President Suharto's recent press crackdown and speculated as to what the press would be allowed to cover dur-

ing the upcoming APEC conference. 'It is hard to see how he [Clinton] can avoid referring to Indonesia's lawless invasion and subsequent annexation of East Timor,' said the paper.

USAID prioritises democracy and human rights

According to the *Far Eastern Economic Review* of 18 August, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) is giving increased priority to democracy and human rights concerns, and is channelling more money into Indonesian NGOs working in this area – US\$1.7 million to September. These organisations have often been under pressure from a regime which views criticism as disloyalty.

This kind of US support will raise the hackles of those in the Indonesian government who have rejected western interpretation of human rights as unwelcome interference in the internal affairs of the state.

CGI increases Indonesian aid

In spite of reports of press bans, human rights abuses and trade union repression, donor countries pledged more than US\$5 billion of new assistance to Indonesia at the annual meeting of the Paris club, the Consultative Group on Indonesia (CGI), on 7-8 July. Human rights groups, notably from France, had unsuccessfully lobbied western governments, asking them to link aid with human rights concerns.

The most notable increases in aid come from the British and Spanish governments, and are related to arms sales. British aid has risen from US\$98.6 million last year to US\$150.49 million this year. Japan remains the largest donor, pledging US\$1.67 billion this year, up from US\$1.44 billion last year.

EUROPEAN UNION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The European Union council of ministers criticised the recent violence in Dili in a statement on 18 July. The council reaffirmed 'the need for observance of human rights, particularly as regards freedom of worship and free access to the territory for international organisations. This is the only way in which the necessary conditions can be created for the success of efforts undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary General with a view to a just, lasting and internationally acceptable solution to the East Timor question'.

The German presidency of the EU is believed to be anxious to strengthen ties with ASEAN. Renewal of the 1980 EU-ASEAN trade agreement has been vetoed by Portugal until the situation in East Timor improves. A conference between ASEAN and EU foreign ministers is due to take place in Karlsruhe on 23 September.

ber. According to Hans-Peter Repnik, chair of the council of ministers for cooperation and development, reported in the Portuguese daily *Diário de Notícias* on 13 July, EU aid is still dependent on democracy, human rights and good governance.

ASEAN

Indonesia under fire at Bangkok meeting

Foreign ministers of the Association of South East Asian Nations met their 'dialogue partners' – the USA, New Zealand, Canada, the EU, Australia, Japan and Korea – in Bangkok on 26-28 July.

Indonesia came under close scrutiny, having recently banned three newspapers and cracked down on trade unions in Northern Sumatra, as well as for continuing unrest in East Timor. The press gave strong coverage to human rights issues as the Thai government deported three foreign rights advocates visiting Bangkok for a seminar on Burma and East Timor organised by the South East Asia Human Rights Network (SEANET). Ali Alatas denied he had pressed for the deportations either of the visitors to the Thai conference or those to the APCET meeting in Manila (page 5). He delivered a tirade against 'well-meaning but gullible non-governmental organisations subject to manipulation of small groups of people who only represent themselves'.

SEANET issued a press release deploring 'the total absence of references to human rights concerns in the region and of follow-up discussions on the declaration of human rights as stated in the 1993 ASEAN joint communique'. SEANET accused the foreign ministers of double standards in showing concern for tensions outside the region, such as in Bosnia and Rwanda, while failing to demonstrate similar concern for tensions in the South East Asian Region, especially those caused by the Indonesian government in East Timor.

JAPAN

Diet members' visit

Five representatives from the Japanese diet members forum on East Timor visited the territory from 11-13 August. The cross-party group was not allowed to visit Xanana Gusmão, but handed to Ali Alatas a letter addressed to Xanana from Takako Doi, the socialist speaker of Japan's house of representatives. Spokeswomen for the group, Tomiko Okazaki described the meeting with the Indonesian foreign minister as 'too short for a proper exchange of views'.

According to a BBC World Service report on 12 August, the group appeared keen to devote

its energies to finding a solution to the East Timor problem. But it seems unlikely that its call for a referendum in East Timor and the withdrawal of troops will have endeared it to the Indonesian authorities.

The group, which was not allowed to travel outside Dili, met with Bishop Belo in spite of efforts by a Japanese embassy official in Jakarta to cancel it. The group also visited Santa Cruz cemetery, where it made an offering of thousands of folded-paper cranes prepared by Japanese solidarity groups. The cranes, symbolising consolation for the souls of the dead, were first used in the aftermath of the Hiroshima atomic bomb.

Bishop Belo asked the group to use its influence to halt Tokyo's economic aid to Jakarta as a way of pressurising Indonesia to stop its violence against the East Timorese. ■

CHURCH

Bishop denounces Western complicity

Bishop Belo has continued to speak out against Indonesian violence in East Timor and complicity of Western governments in the oppression of East Timor.

In an interview with journalist John Pilger, published in *New Statesman & Society* on 15 July, Bishop Belo said Western governments' lies and hypocrisy serve their economic interests. 'We ask the people of the world to understand this', he said, and 'not to forget that we are here, struggling for life every day.'

Pilger's film *Death of a Nation* presented Max Stahl's eye-witness testimonies of a second massacre – in Dili Hospital – in which injured victims of the Santa Cruz massacre were killed by Indonesian soldiers. The evidence has received little but scepticism from governments in Britain and Australia.

The Bishop spoke with certainty of the fact that there had been more killings, saying how injured victims had disappeared overnight from the military hospital. Witnesses had told him that killings took place during an overnight power-cut.

The Bishop also revealed that there had been two attempts on his life. The first was after his famous letter of 1989 to the United Nations, in which he called for a referendum. According to Belo, an ambush was prepared for him while he was travelling. 'In 1991 they tried again when I went to the site of a massacre near Viqueque, where more than 1,000 people were killed in 1983,' he said. 'It was after I had seen the graves – the evidence of the massacre – that they tried again. But they were unsuccessful and I escaped.'

The British foreign office has been saying recently that it is wrong to suggest that widespread abuses of human rights persist in East Timor. The bishop felt Western govern-

ments were, quite simply, lying. 'It has never been worse here,' he said. 'There are more restrictions than ever before. No one can speak, no one can demonstrate. People disappear... for the ordinary people, there is no freedom, only a continuing nightmare'.

He believes there is a real danger that East Timor will be forgotten again and for this reason he asks that supporters outside keep the issue alive and in public debate.

Belo's letter to the Indonesian government

The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 11 August reported that Bishop Belo had written an open letter to the Indonesian government that was widely circulated in East Timor and copied to the nuncio, Archbishop Pietro Sambini in Jakarta.

The letter reiterated the bishop's view that the Indonesian military presence in East Timor should be reduced, that religious tensions were mounting, and that a public referendum should be held in order to accommodate the people's aspirations. Belo suggested that the Indonesian government hold a series of dialogues with the political factions that existed in East Timor before its annexation in 1976.

In the meantime, he said, East Timor should be granted 'a wider autonomy or... a special status, making it a special territory'. The bishop emphasised that this should have a legal basis. The letter (summarised in *UCANEWS* 780/A) stated that it is time for political groups to reconcile. The church will be of service if asked to become a mediator in the dialogues. The bishop called for greater freedom of expression and organising, and for cooperation 'with the secretary general of the United Nations and the Portuguese government and also resistance groups to settle the East Timor problem through continuous dialogues'.

The church, said the bishop, deserved special treatment given its significance in East Timor, and should be allowed to bring in foreign missionaries.

Pilgrimage to Fatima

A group of 41 East Timorese received permission to visit the Marian Shrine at Fatima in Portugal, coinciding with talks between Indonesia and Portugal in Geneva on 6 May (see page 4).

The trip was controversial, as East Timorese opponents of integration living in Portugal felt that it was for pro-integrationist East Timorese and that it had been instigated by the Indonesian government. Reports suggested the visit was sponsored by the Indonesia-Portugal Friendship Association, which is chaired by President

Suharto's daughter Sitti Hardiyanti Rukmana.

The group appeared to be led by Indonesia's special ambassador for East Timorese affairs, Francisco Lopez da Cruz. The pilgrims were pelted with eggs and excrement by their Portugal-based compatriots on arrival in Lisbon. According to Lopez da Cruz in an interview with *Expresso* on 14 May, the visit was purely for religious purposes and the Indonesian government merely gave its permission to the participants to go, without contributing funds.

Exiles return

A group of 24 East Timorese now living abroad visited East Timor from 26 March to 7 April. Some members of the group had not been back in 18 years, while others had left East Timor more recently. Some were impressed with the apparent development of the territory. Others, however, expressed doubts about the realities of life beyond appearances.

The group was received by Bishop Belo, who asked the exiles to teach their children Tetum, and to preserve their native traditions and culture for future generations. He asked them to support Dili diocese and the seminary he is building, noting that Catholics now account for 81 percent of the population.

The visit was sponsored by the Indonesia-Portugal friendship Association, and accompanied by Francisco Xavier do Amaral and the wife of Francisco Lopez da Cruz.

Christian consultation

The sixth Christian consultation on East Timor took place in Strasbourg from 17 to 19 June. Drawing together Catholic and Protestant groups and churches that have been following developments in East Timor, it evaluated the situation and ways of supporting the East Timorese church in its search for peace with justice. The consultation sent messages of support to Catholic and Protestant communities in East Timor. ■

STOP PRESS

US Catholic Conference calls for action at APEC

The Social Justice department of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops is urging senators to ask President Clinton to press President Suharto on matters of human rights violations and the intimidation of Catholic leaders and on the pressing need for steps leading to reconciliation and a UN-sponsored settlement of the conflict in East Timor. President Clinton will be in Indonesia in mid-November for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit. ■

BOOK REVIEW

East Timor: Getting away with murder?

Hugh O'Shaughnessy

The British Coalition for East Timor,
PO Box 2349, London E1 3HX

1994. Text & black & white photographs, 33 pages,
£7.50 inc p&p.

This book, through pictures and words, conveys a sense of the unreality of real life for the people of East Timor.

The author is careful not to romanticise the past. Yet through his observations of daily life in East Timor, he illustrates how every aspect of life has been affected by the Indonesian invasion and occupation.

From the old woman seeking a fair price for her coffee, to the language taught in schools and the religion practised O'Shaughnessy unfolds the far-reaching effects of the occupation, making them real and visible to the reader. In clear and simple language the author draws attention to the core issues of occupation and their impact on daily life. The pictures speak for themselves.

This short book touches the heart of what is so wrong about the continuing occupation of East Timor.

Caroline Nolan

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