



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

Timor link, no. 9, March 1987

This is the Published version of the following publication

UNSPECIFIED (1987) Timor link, no. 9, March 1987. Timor link (9). pp. 1-12.

The publisher's official version can be found at

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THE CHURCH CHALLENGED

We include in this issue three documents which bear upon the position of the Catholic church in East Timor and, in particular, upon the person of the Apostolic Administrator, Mgr Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo — who was appointed to his present office almost exactly four years ago, in 1983.

The first is an appeal from Mr Xanana Gusmao, expressed in a letter written to a priest. In it, the Commander of Falantil (military wing of East Timor's liberation movement) challenges those who, like Mgr Belo, are alleged to be less than 100% committed to East Timor's independence. It is a bitter and passionate statement, which must raise painful issues for all those in East Timor who are concerned with the territory's future.

The second is also a letter, this time describing the intense surveillance imposed on Mgr Belo by the Indonesian authorities. The fact that Mgr Belo is under criticism from East Timorese nationalists does not stop him from being regarded as a thorn in the flesh of the Indonesian authorities — as his predecessor was before him, an independent witness to what has

happened in the territory, one who has condemned the atrocities and injustices committed in Indonesia's name and who must therefore be silenced as effectively as possible.

The third document is, at first sight, of historical importance: we publish extracts from Mgr Belo's first pastoral letter, made public this month three years ago, on March 11 1984.

It should be read carefully for what it says, and also for what it obviously could not say. It sheds light upon the thinking of Mgr Belo and upon the complex pressures which bear down upon all those who carry moral and political responsibilities in the territory.

Mgr Belo places himself firmly in the main line of modern Catholic teaching, which insists that justice is the prerequisite for genuine peace. He selects with care passages from standard church documents which condemn precisely the atrocities and abuses which occur in East Timor. The message is clear: the situation in East Timor is condemned by the universal church. It is against this background that his criticisms should be read. In one sense, Mgr Belo's own political

sympathies are irrelevant. He has a pastoral mission, and this entails a responsibility to condemn the major features of the situation in East Timor which are referred to in this Pastoral Letter.

Next month there will be elections in East Timor. The tragic experience of Timor's people, which Mgr Belo describes, has not changed since 1984. Mgr Belo's message remains relevant in its moral challenge, a voice set beside the passionate appeal of Xanana.

As we write this editorial, reports have begun to reach the outside world that a strange calm has descended — as it did briefly in 1983. Messages have been received saying that during March known members of the nationalist movement have been able to enter the towns of Baucau, Viqueque, Los Palos and Same without retaliation. They have been able to move about freely. The Indonesian armed forces have not attacked them or sought to detain them. It is as if there is a de facto suspension of hostilities.

Is this due to the elections? Does it indicate a new attempt to charm Fretilin out of the mountains? Is it a prelude to renewed war, as it was in 1983? At the moment we are unable to say. We will bring more news in a later issue.

XANANA APPEALS TO THE CHURCH

East Timor Link has received a copy of a letter which Xanana Gusmao, military commander of Fretilin, wrote on June 27 last year to a priest in East Timor. It is a passionate document, as the leader of the liberation movement himself admits, which throws light on the tensions which exist within East Timor's church as members of the clergy — and naturally lay Catholics too — struggle to respond with moral courage to the acute difficulties and political pressures which they face every day in carrying out their mission.

In writing this letter, it was clearly Mr Xanana Gusmao's intention to raise important issues of principle engaging the responsibility of the Catholic church in East Timor. He makes a number of very direct criticisms. At the same time, readers should bear in mind that this was a private letter, not intended for wide publication. Although he speaks with the authority of his position, we think it is unlikely that Mr Gusmao was setting out a formal statement of Fretilin policy.

Because the letter has come into the public domain, and is an important document, we reproduce it here. For reasons of space, we have had to shorten it slightly, but believe we have included all the most salient points. (Note: the sub-headings have been inserted by *East Timor Link*.)

"Reverend Father, (...) companion in struggle and brother of the Maubere people. The position you and other priests have taken is both a great consolation and a moral and political inspiration to us, whereas those who were born here but do not recognise the rights of our people only deserve our disdain!

It is true that the Church is not involved in politics in the narrow sense of the word. But, on the other hand, it cannot remove itself from the milieu in which it is integrated because those who make it up, laity and clergy, are living members of the society in which the church is inserted.

The Church's Mission

Fretilin does not regard the Church as an abstract entity, and even less as unreal or fictitious, because its prophetic mission (I would say its mission of liberation) is in practice to support the people in their struggle for liberation. If the Church's concept of liberation does not lead to integral and direct involvement, how do you explain the position taken by Cardinal Sin of

the Philippines, Bishop Tutu, or by Churches all over the world in defence of solutions based on the rights of people? Direct involvement means that the Church must affirm the fundamental rights and freedom of society. We think that if the Church stays out of politics it only places itself over society and becomes a dead structure, a structure without a mission in society, a situation which will only debase the Church and isolate it from the people's rights and freedom.

Reverend Father, aren't we in danger of being deluded by the 'fantastic conversions' which have occurred? Whereas if we are objective and keep our feet firmly on Timorese soil, we have to admit that the reason for these miraculous conversions is really the people's search for protection allied to their rejection of the occupier.

It is not our intention to offend the Church by saying these things (which are readily apparent to anyone with good sense) but simply to affirm that our people want to maintain their hope and belief that the Church of East Timor will continue to interpret faithfully their aspirations, anxieties, wishes and struggle. If not, the Maubere people may come to lose the confidence they have placed in the Church if they come to think that the Church opposes what they have sacrificed their lives for. It would be the Church's own fault if these quick conversions were to turn around.

(...) The Church cannot be satisfied with numbers which are illusory if not accompanied by real practice of faith.

We know and we lament the 'holy war' the enemy is waging in the controlled areas, leading to 'ad hoc' conversions followed by acceptance of doctrine. Nothing is more prejudicial to the Church we respect. We know the difficulties, the good intentions and the efforts being made, but we think that unless the Church avoids self-satisfaction the essentials of conversion will be reduced to simple statistics.

Differences among the Clergy

We believe that the circumstances of war generated the massive conversions and that this demonstrates the trust of our people in their Church. This trust will be compromised if the Church does not place itself alongside our people. Frustration will follow and faith will be dissolved in 'luliks' as the real bearers of the people's aspirations. I am not a

priest or a catechist but I know several occasions when people have turned to the Church at a time of problems, sickness or affliction but, right after, have returned to their practice of 'hamulak'.

Reverend Father, we do not deny or forget the firm and brave attitudes taken by the Timorese Church and we know that our struggle would be much more difficult but for the indispensable support the East Timorese Church has been giving the resistance! However, I know that there are some Goanese priests in Timor who are 'seratus persen' (one hundred percent) Indonesian and that Mgr Belo himself (although he does not deny the rights of the East Timorese people) defends integration under the facade of 'autonomy'. These political differences within the Church will reduce the capacity of the Church to represent, as it has in the past, with authority and a clear voice...which must be heard!

The blind theory defended by the 'one hundred percenters' is a vile treason to our people. By it some members of the Church legitimise crime and injustice thereby making impossible real peace in the homeland of the Maubere people.

Peace is only possible in East Timor with the consent of Fretilin. Any effort to impose peace by surrendering (promoted by the puppet governor to induce guerrillas to return to their villages for reintegration in society) will lead to the continuing of the war. We are capable of attacking and destroying villages and camps in most parts of the country, but we do not do it to save the people further suffering. As a liberation movement we have the sacred duty to continue to affirm to our one thousand times heroic people that we will continue fighting, whatever the price, until we are victorious or exterminated.

Respect for the Church

The trust and respect we have for the Timorese Church will give way to deep frustration if the Church turns away from our people. Reverend Father, that is not a threat (for God's sake) but we must confess that the disillusionment would be too upsetting for us to easily forget it! I refer to the Church as a whole, for all of us in the bush recognise profoundly that many priests have suffered together with our people not by sensational words but by their firm and continued actions and tough and persistent efforts beside our

people with Mgr Martinho Lopes at their head and sons like Fr Francisco Fernandes.

His Holiness John Paul II, in an address to catechists, stressed the most important mission carried out by them, declaring that the Church will always need them. We have the same opinion of the Timorese priests, the true sons of East Timor and those foreign priests who have given themselves to the cause of our people, and a small number of well-formed catechists. However, we can completely do without the 'one hundred percenters'; these second class Indonesian citizens can work for the Republic of Indonesia to convert the large numbers of Moslems in their country. But they will not leave by themselves because they are protected by a rich governor who supports their plan for autonomy, but as part of greater Indonesia! There they can claim their right to speak Portuguese

freely and talk in Tetum, about the rupiahs they have been able to make.

An Appeal to Unite

Reverend Father, forgive our language and uncontrolled state of soul, but it is difficult for us to tolerate certain individuals who ignore the disgrace, destruction and death of our people, which is no different to any other people in the world. In the South Pacific a small number of islands with a few hundred thousand people have been able to form states. Maldives, Seychelles are the smallest points on the map but are independent countries. The Timorese people with their natural resources which will guarantee development cannot be independent just because Indonesia does not want it. The message sent to the students in Indonesia (I presume Your Reverence knows of this) was to answer the vacillating position taken by Mgr Belo

and the 'one hundred percenters'.

Scrawling under pressure of anger because some renegade sons of our people want to deny the rights of our people, I request you Reverend Father to pass on our message to the other priests and the appeal of the leaders of the struggle to settle the political differences in the Church and reunite them in *one authoritative voice*.

Finally I apologise for the character of this message but I think these are crucial problems being debated by our people at a time when an inadequate position taken by the Church will only result in suffering and continuation of war allowing the enemy to exterminate our people.

With great esteem,
Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao
Commander in Chief, Falantil
East Timor, 27 June 1986.

DOCUMENT: LETTER FROM TIMOR

The January issue of *Em Timor Leste a paz e possivel* contains the translation of a letter received from East Timor at the end of October 1986. Though undated, it must have been written soon after June 1986, following the attack against Fr Walter van Wouwe, which we reported in *East Timor Link* number 8. It was therefore written at about the same time as Mr Xanana Gusmao's critique and appeal.

It describes with feeling the atmosphere and conditions in which Mgr Belo, and other church officials, must work. The original was in Portuguese. We print part of it here, re-translated from the French.

Mgr Belo under Surveillance, Threatened

"The Bishop of Dili is being intimidated. He is under surveillance day and night. Anyone going to Lecidere (the Bishop's residence) can observe this sad spectacle: people, badly hidden, standing guard, watching in twos or alone. The bishop's surveillance is so richly done that even the presence of the superior officer who controls and supervises the system has been revealed!

'Ten years after...' and everything is still to do! No-one accepts the annexation. Terror is necessary at every level: from the humble sweeper to the bishop! the doors and windows of his house are all watched. Everyone in Dili knows it, that is why the people are afraid to visit the bishop or to go and confide in him. Doors and windows are monitored and so are conversations. And if a visitor should visit him, a sophisticated listening device is employed...

It is a fact that since 1975 the bishop is a problem. In the presence of the rulers who have invaded he defers, weakens, is retiring. But

there comes a point when he cannot take any more and... he speaks up. D. Jose spoke, D. Martinho spoke... and they had to leave!

But no-one has had to submit to as much humiliation and pressure as the present bishop. On several occasions they have demeaned him to the point of denying what he has said, or pressuring him to make a denial himself. As if the bishop of Dili could be ignorant of the incessant and gross abuses committed in East Timor, directly by the Indonesian regular army, or by the intermediaries who are under its orders.

The newspapers have informed us that the bishop of Dili cast doubt upon information that he himself had released, or upon some of the points made in his own letters to Dom Martinho. We recently learned from Indonesian sources that the bishop of Dili is facing threatening forms of intimidation to make him withdraw his protest against brutalities committed by the Indonesian army.

The episode which provoked the protest and denunciation of the bishop was the attack, on the Los Palos road, against a Belgian Salesian priest by an Indonesian soldier...."

DOCUMENT: Extracts from Mgr Belo's First Pastoral Letter, March 11 1984

3. Reconciliation & Forgiveness in the Timorese Community

Today more than in other periods of history, the demand of Christian love must be rooted in the minds and hearts of Timorese. The culture of love and forgiveness must replace the culture of hate and mutual elimination. We either unite, and so exist as a people and church, or we wipe each other out and disappear as a people and a church. Today we have to shout very loud that love is stronger than hate.

3.1 Like the people of Israel, we have turned our backs on the God of Abraham, Isaac or Jacob, and we have erected, for our adoration and worship, various sorts of golden calf: abandoning the true Catholic faith to embrace other religions or tolerate other creeds: placing on the same level Christianity and animism... and superstitions (...)

3.2 The history of Timor in this 20th century has been marked by three wars with tragic consequences: the war of Manufahi, the Japanese invasion and the consequent appearance of black columns (1943-45), and the civil war of 1975 with the evil effects which endure to the present.

During the period from 1975 to 1984 we see that tens of thousands of our brothers and sisters have died or been killed, or disappeared. As Christians, let us ask our consciences, „Where is Abel, your brother?’ We have to say...that we too have contributed to the civil war. We were blinded by the idea of liberty, of ambition and power, and lost the sense of brotherly love and human solidarity. We ranged ourselves into parties, confronted other Timorese as adversaries, as a hindrance in our rise to power over people and things. Our voices thundered: ‘Burn the traitors!’, ‘Death to the fascists!’, ‘Death to the integrationists!’, ‘Death to the supporters of independence!’, ‘Death to the right!’, ‘Death to the left!’. In the end it was a brother or sister, a Timorese, a people who died.

From (1974 until the present), we have contributed to the continuation of hatreds, revenge, accusations, murders, exile and torture in Timorese families, in our villages and hamlets in East Timor.

Today we are continuing to contribute to the degradation of the dignity of Timorese as human beings in

places which, if they are not concentration camps, are also not suitable places for human beings.

We have contributed to the detention and torture of our brothers and sisters. We have contributed to a situation in which their families (wives and children) live in sadness, with insufficient food, dependent on charity, in shame and anxiety.

We have contributed to a climate of insecurity, in which freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of movement are lacking, without the democratic and human conditions which would enable us to live like human beings with full rights and duties.

We have contributed to a situation in which our brothers and sisters are abandoned in hospitals and clinics, without drugs, without help, without comfort.

We have contributed to the holding of the succession of popular trials and public executions.

4. Implore the Forgiveness of Almighty God

To implore the forgiveness of Almighty God for such evil, which cries to heaven, we must start a journey of repentance and collective conversion.

In this it is the people of East Timor who must ask forgiveness and forgive offences.

I would like to indicate some essential lines for our common conversion this Lent, as the Holy Year draws to a close.

4.1 ‘Forgive seventy times seven times’

This means forgiving always and everywhere.

God our Lord does not delight in the death of the sinner (cf Ezekial 18.24), but wants sinners to be converted, to turn from their sins and create in themselves a new heart and a new spirit.... Forgiveness of offences and love of enemies constitutes one of the most admirable and novel features of gospel morality. The Second Vatican Council recommends with regard to respect and love for enemies: ‘Respect and love ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently from us in social, political and even religious matters. In fact, the more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through such courtesy and

love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them’ (*Gaudium et Spes* 28).

The initiative for reconciliation comes from God, and the church and Christians must be agents of peace in the world, must create a climate of reconciliation, of forgiveness, of encounter, of fraternity, of welcome in all sectors and at all levels: in the family, at work, between couples, between children, between employers and employees, between rich and poor, between *pendatang* and *putra daerah* (ie between foreigners and Timorese, eds.)

4.2 Cultivate justice and charity

For human rights to be respected and the common good to become a reality among the Timorese community, it is necessary for all of us to be able to cultivate certain virtues which are essential for our civil harmony. These virtues are justice, equity, virtue, charity, prudence and love.

Justice is the ‘firm and constant will to give to each person what is theirs’ (Thomas Aquinas, ST II-II). Justice is the basis of society. ‘The social order and its development must always work to the benefit of the human person....This social order requires constant improvement. It must be founded on truth, built on justice and animated by love’ (*Gaudium et Spes* 26)...

Justice animated by charity leads us to give preferential attention to the most disadvantaged persons and communities. “Coming down to practical and particularly urgent consequences, the Council lays stress on reverence for man; everyone must consider his every neighbour without exception as another self, taking into account first of all his life and the means necessary to living it with dignity (...) Furthermore, whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia or wilful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on mind or body, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practise them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they

are a supreme dishonour to the creator." (*Gaudium et Spes*, 27.)

To restore to charity the dignity which belongs to it, it has to contain, above all, the demand for justice. Justice is the primary form of charity, and charity should exceed justice. Charity has as its primary object the love of God and neighbour. As well as presupposing justice, it transcends it, since charity does not aim merely at the right of the human person, but aims directly at the person as such, with their rights and duties.

Justice is a minimum form of charity. It contents itself with giving to each person what belongs to them, what is required: *unicuique suum*. In contrast, charity requires us to give to others what is ours, something that belongs to us: health, human and intellectual abilities, spiritual graces, even our own lives....

4.3 Lovers of Peace

The state of generalised injustice generates violence and threatens peace. 'Peace is not merely just the absence of war' (*Gaudium et Spes* 78). That is true. But today in Timor the first need is for the war to stop. It has lasted nine years. Wars are not and cannot be eternal, and peace was never impossible. We all want and love peace, but today it is difficult to obtain

peace for Timor. Above all we insist that the peace we want for Timor must be first and foremost the absence of war. The only losers from this war are the people of Timor. It is they who suffer, they who weep, they who die, they who are doomed to disappear from the face of the earth. The people of Timor at the moment are a pawn in a game whose players, jealous of their dignity, will not yield an inch for a peaceful solution to the problem. Abuses on one side (arrests and massacres) and on the other (house-burnings, murders, robberies) do nothing either to bring peace nearer or to win the sympathy of the people. Instead they deepen the gulf between the warring parties and the mistrust and hostility among people.

Peace is possible. But this peace can come only from Christ if, among human beings, it is based on justice, on respect for the dignity of the human person and on love of God. (...)

Peace is the fruit of justice and love. However, justice as the mere realisation and guarantee of human rights is not sufficient to obtain peace on earth. It presupposes a sharing of material, cultural and spiritual possessions. It presupposes a communion of minds and hearts. An essential condition for this is a constant climate of mutual trust and a firm

resolve to seek the peace which springs from inside human beings, which results from a good conscience, on good terms with the Prince of Peace. Peace, first and foremost, is the work of Christ. Peace is the fruit of a heart renewed and quickened by the Spirit, of a soul reconciled with itself and reconciled with God. (...)

6. Final Considerations

(...) The ideological conflicts and tensions which at present disrupt civil harmony should and must give way to acts of peace, so that a communion of minds may be restored among us in complete understanding.

Timorese brothers and sisters, we believe in the promises of God. We are sure that, despite all difficulties and all obstacles, in the church, in the world and in East Timor, the Holy Spirit is always working to unite people and bring them together in his love. Let us, first and foremost, be reconciled with God. Let us be reconciled among ourselves. Christians are, by vocation, people of forgiveness. Let us pray, work, forgive and love in our families and our villages, in our *kecamatan*s and in our *kabupaten*s. Love will prevail! Peace and justice will embrace and our land will have peace.

Dili, 11 March 1984

THE CHURCH INSIDE

BISHOPS WRITE TO MGR BELO

In the last issue of *East Timor Link* we published the letter of sympathy which Jaime L. Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila in the Philippines, sent Mgr Belo in July 1986.

In this issue, we publish extracts from a letter to Mgr Belo from the Most Reverend James W. Malone, Bishop of Youngstown and President of the United States Catholic Bishops' Conference. It was written on August 18 1986.

"Dear Mgr Belo,

I am writing to express my interest as President of the U.S. Catholic Conference for increased communication between our Conference and the Church in East Timor. I don't know if Cardinal John O'Connor's letter of June 19, 1985 ever reached you. In any event, I wanted to reassure you of our continued interest and concern.

I have read your Pastoral Letter of March 3, 1985 (entitled 'Responsible Parenthood' in its English translation). I find official Indonesian attempts to limit the population of East Timor

particularly affronting not only because of the Church's rejection of unnatural birth control but, given the great loss of life that has already taken place among a largely Catholic people, this policy takes on the character of genocide. A resolution introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on December 10, 1985 takes a similar position on this question, and I have enclosed a copy of this resolution for your information...

I want you to be assured of our constant prayers that God will strengthen you and the Church in East Timor in your struggle to preserve and enhance the dignity of life and the right of your people to live in peace and freedom."

Reply to Cardinal O'Connor

East Timor Link has been informed that Cardinal O'Connor was sent a reply during the last quarter of 1986 — but that the original of the Cardinal's letter never arrived. According to our reports, the body of Mgr Belo's reply was as follows:

"With this letter I like to express my great and deep gratitude for your solidarity and your constant prayers. Thank you for the support extended to the People and the Catholic Church in East Timor.

His Eminence: I dare to declare here that the only peaceful solution for East Timor is a political one. And this means the respect of the right of the people. To get openly involved in defending the people I take the liberty to appeal to your good offices to keep on insisting with the United States Government and, particularly, with President Reagan, in order to press the Indonesian Government about the autonomy for East Timor. The main issue on East Timor is the problem of Justice, Peace, respect. So the first step is that a full and real autonomy should be given to the people of East Timor.

His Eminence, we ask that the Catholics of the United States keep on praying for the Church in East Timor."

Reply to Cardinal Sin

A reply was also sent to Cardinal Sin

during the same period, saying:

"His Eminence,

My sincere and respectful greetings.

I wish to express, personally and in the name of the whole diocese of Dili, and the People of East Timor, our deep gratitude for the support and deep solidarity His Eminence has shown to the People and the Church of East Timor.

Indeed the stand of the Church is not

to get openly involved in politics, but to defend the basic human rights of the People.

His Eminence, we ask your good offices to defend our cause with the government of President Aquino. In order to keep on insisting with the other ASEAN countries about the possibility of autonomy for East Timor.

His Eminence, we ask that the Catholics of the Philippines keep on

praying for us."

With sentiments of great esteem for the Archdiocese of Manila.,

(Note: Both letters appear to have been written in English. ASEAN — The Association of South East Asian Nations — is composed of Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.)

NEWS FROM INSIDE

Round-up

Reports are beginning to emerge from various sources within East Timor, suggesting that known nationalists have been able to enter and move around some towns — including Baucau, Viqueque, Los Palos, Same — without interference from the Indonesian military. This development, which has yet to be confirmed, can be interpreted in various ways. It may indicate the failure of the recent Indonesian offensive; or that a new strategy is being introduced by the Indonesian authorities.

Hostilities outside these towns appear to have been continuing. Observers have reported seeing helicopters arriving recently in Baucau carrying wounded Indonesian soldiers.

Desecration of Catholic shrines.

The hands were broken off a statue of Mary in the church in Comoro, apparently by a member of Hansip. It has been claimed he was paid to do this by members of military intelligence, though the individual concerned asserted he was a 'communist'.

More recently, on February 24th, the statue of Mary in the Catholic school of St Joseph in Dili was destroyed. Here again, it has been claimed that members of Indonesian military intelligence were responsible for this attack, perhaps in an attempt to provoke dissension between Catholics and Timorese nationalists.

In protest against the attack, a permanent vigil at the site has been mounted since February 24th by groups of Catholics and members of the clergy.

The Governor

This incident has not been the only cause of tension in Dili. Controversy also surrounds the future of the Governor, Mario Carrascalao. His term of office is due to end in September, and it is not known whether it will be renewed or whether

he will be replaced.

The name of Jaime Oliveira, currently the administrator of Oecusse, has been put forward as a possible replacement. He is apparently interested in the job, and has the support of some top officers in the Indonesian military in East Timor, who are believed to dislike Mario Carrascalao.

Mr Carrascalao is thought to retain the support of General Moerdani.

Mr Oliveira was an official in the old Portuguese administration.

Transmigration

Kompas reported (December 24 1986) that since 1982 3,419 people (825 families) have been registered transmigrants in East Timor, under the Indonesian government's programme. Of these 1,933 people (426 families) were East Timorese. The others came from Bali, Jogjakarta and Central and East Java. All these people, according to the report, were settled in Bobonaro and Kovalima.

The head of the East Timor Regional Office of the Transmigration department, Mr Basoeki Adisoekma, told *Kompas* that during 1987/88 his department would be emphasising the re-settlement of Timorese who had left their villages: the infrastructure, he said, is in place, and the programme will start in Baucau, where 300 families will be resettled.

The February issue of *Tapol Bulletin* (p.12-15) includes a lengthy analysis of the Indonesian government's new 're-settlement policy', and its implications over the long term for transmigration from outside East Timor, and population control inside the territory.

The article argues that the recent military campaign may have been intended to drive Fretilin out of relatively more prosperous areas which had been emptied of civilians by the Indonesian government's forced resettlement policies. These lands, it is suggested, will be developed for cash crops, or turned over to groups of resettled Timorese and non-Timorese transmigrants. It is argued that the

policy is an adaptation of the existing counter-insurgency strategy, under which the civilian population has been forcibly regrouped and separated both from Fretilin and from their lands. In addition to reinforcing social control, it has been introduced to enhance economic production, making East Timor more self-sufficient in food (less expensive for the state budget) and perhaps a valuable source of export revenues. (*Tapol Bulletin* is available from 8A Treport Street, London SW18 2BP.)

Indonesia's economic crisis

The need for export revenue is likely to become acute in the next few years. The Indonesian economy is extremely dependent on oil revenues, and the fall in oil prices has slashed government income and forced Jakarta to introduce an extremely tight budget. Indonesia's debt-service ratio (the proportion of foreign currency income expended on paying foreign debt obligations) has risen to 40% or more, and the government is increasingly dependent on the massive flow of foreign aid to sustain, even at a very low level, development programmes which are crucial if social pressures are to be contained. External aid is currently providing no less than one quarter of revenue!

Programmes which have been cut include transmigration (54%), new military spending (50%), fertiliser subsidies (almost 70%).

The 1987-89 budget was described by the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (January 15) as "an unmitigated portrayal of the depth of trouble the economy has reached amid low oil prices."

The general economic context is certain to have implications for the situation in East Timor. It may mean the government will slow down (or accelerate) the introduction of transmigrants; and it is likely to force officials to accelerate plans for making East Timor economically self-sufficient. For the moment, however, official commentaries continue to

emphasise Indonesian government expenditure in East Timor, and the territory's economic growth.

Economic growth in East Timor

The December issue of *Indonesia Development News* — magazine of the official National Development Information Office in Jakarta — paints a very positive picture of East Timor's progress since 1975. The two-page article is most discreet, in avoiding all mention of the conflict which has ravaged the country. It also adopts 1976 as base year for statistical analysis, even though this was perhaps the most disrupted year of the entire period.

Some of the official figures are nevertheless worth reporting:

400 kilometres of road built since 1976.

100 inter-city buses in daily operation, motorised vehicles up sixfold.

Telephones: capacity now 500, will shortly be increased to 2000 units.

There are currently "1,200 small manufacturing units in operation, with production value during 1985 totalling \$5.2 million".

Officials say rice production is expected to increase by 6% in 1987, corn production by 7%.

Health services: 31 public health centres, with full complements of staff (doctors, dentists, paramedical workers, support staff), are complemented by 115 auxiliary public health centres. There is one general hospital and there are four regional hospitals.

(*Indonesia Development News*, Papan Sejahtera Building, Suite 801, Jalan Rasuna Said, Kav. C-1, Kuningan, Jakarta Selatan, Indonesia.)

Education

UCA News (February 18 1987) reports

the education statistics for East Timor, as declared by the provincial government.

More than 400 East Timorese students have taken higher education courses in other parts of Indonesia under a scholarship scheme worth over US\$500,000.

The territory's first university was opened in November, and has enrolled some 550 students to take courses in teaching, sociology and politics, and agriculture. The university has been called 'Loro Sae', meaning 'sunrise' in Tetum.

Since 1985-6 there have been three teacher-training colleges (two of them private), with a combined complement of 1,500 students.

In 1985-86 there were 23 senior high schools (4,647 pupils), 71 junior high schools (17,350 pupils), and 500 elementary schools (111,000 pupils).

(*UCA News*, PO Box 69626, Kwun Tong, Hong Kong.)

ELECTIONS IN APRIL

The elections which are to be held in Indonesia on April 23 have aroused considerable interest abroad, because many observers have claimed that they will be taken by the Indonesian government as evidence that the integration of East Timor is complete.

No election was held in East Timor in 1977. In 1982, elections were held in East Timor, to appoint members to the central parliament and to the provincial assembly. This year, in addition to these two bodies, East Timorese will be voting, at the same time as other populations in Indonesia, for the local or sub-district assembly.

Three separate votes will therefore be taking place at the same time.

Only three parties have been permitted to campaign: Golkar (the party of government, literally the 'functional groups' party), the PPP (Development Unity Party, previously a Muslim party), and the PDI (Indonesian Democracy Party, previously an alliance of nationalists and Christians).

None of these parties has roots in East Timor. The three political parties which operated prior to the Indonesian occupation — Fretilin, UDT and Apodeti — are banned or have been dissolved.

Criticism banned

All three of the official parties in the campaign have been required, under a new law of the government, to accept the primacy of 'Pancasila' in their thinking: the five principles of Pancasila (belief in one God,

humanism, nationalism, democracy and social justice) have been State policy since the regime of President Suharto came to power in 1965.

This means, in effect, that all the candidates have to present similar political ideas and values — which are, more precisely, those of the present government.

Freedom to campaign is limited in other ways too. Among other things, candidates must find a psychiatrist to attest to their mental health, and supply a police certificate showing that they were not involved with the communist party in 1965. Candidates may not cast aspersions on government or on government officials. They may not criticise religious groups, organisations, foreign governments or individuals. Nor are they to commit 'other acts contrary to Pancasila ethics'.

Applied to East Timor, these rules prevent candidates referring to the record of the government or the military, or advocating autonomy or independence.

Ballots not secret

Furthermore, special voting conditions are being implemented in East Timor (and in Irian Jaya). Whereas voters in the rest of Indonesia will place voting slips in each of three urns (one for each of the three institutions to which elections are being held), in East Timor there will be up to nine urns — one for each of the three parties standing in each of the three elections.

Rather than writing their

preferences on a slip and voting secretly, Timorese (and Irianese) voters will thus be required to place their slips into an identified urn, observed by the election officials. Such a vote cannot be described as secret.

"One can only speculate on the reasons for this procedure," writes *Tapol* in an analysis of the coming elections. "Perhaps the authorities regard the West Papuans and East Timorese as being too immature to vote like everyone else. Perhaps this method will enable the authorities to guarantee that Golkar wins a comfortable majority as a sign that the Timorese accept Indonesian rule. Perhaps this makes it possible to announce the results fast. In 1982, the East Timor results were the first to be announced."

In 1982, when the same method was used, the turnout in East Timor was particularly high: over 100% of the voters were recorded as voting. Of these, more than 99% were recorded as voting in favour of the government party, Golkar.

Dr Mochtar Kusumaatmadja

Indonesia's Foreign Minister is heading the Golkar slate for East Timor. He is supported by four other Golkar candidates who already sit in parliament.

It has been reported that the PDI will not be standing in East Timor, though PDI members have been actively canvassing for sympathy among the population.

It is not thought that any of the candidates standing for an East Timor seat is a Timorese.

TIMORESE STUDENTS: UPDATE

At the end of February, Dr Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, the Indonesian Foreign Minister made new declarations concerning the case of the four students from East Timor who have been trying to leave Indonesia for Portugal since October.

The four post-graduate students, Antonino Goncalves, Freitas da Camera, Abilio Sereno and Fernandes Soares originally sought refuge in the Dutch Embassy, after three of them were arrested by the Indonesian authorities. They agreed to leave under terms arranged personally between the Dutch Foreign Minister and Dr Mochtar, during an EEC-ASEAN conference which was taking place in Jakarta at the time. Dr Mochtar guaranteed the students' security under this agreement.

Indonesia's new, and apparently more intransigent attitude towards their case was reported on the front page of *Kompas*, the Indonesian Catholic daily, on February 28.

According to *Kompas*, Dr Mochtar gave several reasons why the Indonesian authorities see no reason to grant the students' requests to leave Indonesia.

First of all, he was reported to have said that they are not eligible for repatriation to Portugal, because they did not apply when they should have done.

This would be a most unreasonable claim: it is widely recognised that hundreds of Timorese who did apply are still waiting to leave, and that numerous Timorese were in no position to apply, given the conditions of war which obtained during the period. (One of the students, Antonino Goncalves, was actually with Fretilin in the bush until 1978.)

Secondly, Dr Mochtar is reported to have said that Indonesia would not have objected if the four had wished to visit Portugal as Indonesian citizens — but could not allow them to return as Portuguese, for this would be tantamount to denying that integration had taken place.

This is also an argument which is difficult for a government to justify morally: it looks very much like manipulation of a humanitarian issue for political ends — particularly in view of the fact that Indonesia's relations with Portugal have recently worsened.

In addition, since 1975 virtually no Timorese have been allowed to return to Portugal as independent visitors. (The great majority of those who have been able to leave officially were

repatriated under the protection of the Red Cross.)

Dr Mochtar is further recorded as saying that the students did not fall within the categories defined in the memorandum of understanding reached by Indonesia and Portugal, covering civil servants and their families who were held in East Timor after 1975.

Dr Mochtar also said apparently that the students have been manipulated for political purposes, and that the Indonesian government had not attempted to approach the four directly in order to avoid accusations that the authorities were exerting pressure on them. (If accurately reported, this would not be truthful: as we understand it, great pressure has been brought to bear on all four in private — by officials from the East Timorese local administration as well as by Indonesian security officials, who have gone so far as to make threats against the four.)

The implications

This public denial that the four Timorese are eligible to return to Portugal has alarming implications.

Until this statement, it had been understood that the Indonesian government would process the students' application for resettlement in Portugal.

The Portuguese government is understood to have accepted their application.

It was reported that only one formality remained — for the Indonesian government to issue an exit visa.

If Dr Mochtar's remarks accurately represent Indonesian position, they mean that the four post-graduate students — who have now been waiting to leave since October 20th 1986 — must continue to wait in Jakarta, living under conditions of great uncertainty, while governments bargain over their future.

Such a policy would also leave Indonesia vulnerable to the accusation that the students have become pawns in Jakarta's game plan against Portugal. We report elsewhere in this issue the worsening of relations between the two countries, and the fact that serious obstacles have become apparent in the UN-sponsored talks. The case, which is fundamentally humanitarian in character, would become irredeemably politicised, and the students' dossiers could gather dust indefinitely.

Jakarta's credibility

In the December issue of *East Timor Link*, we reported, on the basis of assessments we had been given, that the four Timorese would probably be able to leave Jakarta for Portugal around Christmas-time.

We were wrong.

This is doubly regrettable.

As we have indicated, the new situation has alarming implications for the students themselves.

In addition, however, the authorities in Jakarta have made it appear that they are not credible interlocutors when it comes to matters relating to East Timor. They appear to be prepared to suspend the rules of normal diplomatic discourse whenever these become inconvenient.

This would not be the posture of a responsible government.

Indonesian officials are fond of dismissing those who criticise their record in East Timor on the grounds that they are extremist, politically motivated, culturally-biased, or cavalier with the truth. But how can observers respond other than critically when the authorities in Jakarta allow themselves to rewrite the facts whenever it suits them to do so, or appear ready to take political advantage of humanitarian issues?

Governments, however well disposed towards Indonesia, face very similar difficulties in discharging their responsibilities honourably, when they are faced by such policy decisions.

If the new policy should be confirmed, the government in Jakarta would once again — and it would be profoundly regrettable — have given observers good reason to doubt its judgement and its word.

Spain

On November 24-26, the *Comite de Apoyo y Solidaridad con Timor Leste* sponsored a solidarity meeting for East Timor in Madrid. The speakers who contributed to discussions of the situation inside East Timor, European responsibilities, and relations with the Pacific, included academics from Spanish and French universities, Spanish, Dutch and German members of the European parliament, and representatives from Iepala. A speaker from Fretilin was invited.

The meeting was organised conjointly by the *Universidad Autonoma de Madrid*, the *Universidad Complutense de Madrid* and the *Universidad Politecnica de Madrid*.

THE UN INITIATIVE: TALKS STUTTER

The conditions under which the Portuguese and Indonesian governments are discussing East Timor continue to become ever more troubled and difficult. Relations between the two countries are having an impact not only on all aspects of the East Timor issue, but on other matters as well. Since our last issue in December, there have been developments in relation to the UN Human Rights Commission, humanitarian questions relating to refugees (such as the four students in Jakarta), and EEC-ASEAN relations.

UN Human Rights Commission

The first real evidence that the UN talks may have reached a point of crisis — or, more precisely, started to face the substantive political issues surrounding sovereignty — emerged at the UN Human Rights Commission in February 1987. The Portuguese representative not only made a more vigorous intervention than in previous years, but exercised, for the first time ever, Portugal's right of reply. The Indonesian delegation's intervention, responding to Portuguese remarks about the coming elections in East Timor, was outstandingly sour in tone.

Portugal raised the matter of East Timor no less than three times at different forums during the Session.

Stung by an Indonesian reference to New Caledonia, the French delegation also raised the matter of East Timor — another historical first. The French representative hoped that the people of East Timor would be able at some point in the future to express a choice about their future.

What has happened?

Portugal hardens its position

Apparently, the Portuguese and Indonesian delegations involved in the New York talks did indeed begin to address the question of sovereignty — spurred on to some degree by the knowledge that elections will be held in East Timor in April.

There is some confusion about the Portuguese negotiating position. It is reliably reported from Lisbon that, as early as last Autumn, the Portuguese government had considered, and ruled against, a proposal under which Portugal would give some recognition to the forthcoming elections, thereby permitting them to stand in for an act of

self-determination.

Observers continued to receive disquieting reports, nonetheless, that this option was still on the table. It appears, too, that Portuguese officials did advance the idea, formally or informally, at the New York talks with Indonesia — though some reports suggest this was an initiative which the Portuguese government had not authorised.

Whatever Portugal did, however, it has become clear that such a proposal is unacceptable to Indonesia. The Indonesian delegation has made it known that Indonesia would refuse to permit the United Nations or Portugal to observe the elections or introduce a procedure, coinciding with the elections, that would offer East Timorese an opportunity to declare, in some form of words or another, whether or not they wish to remain within Indonesia.

Given the fact that such a procedure would require Portugal to make immense concessions to Indonesia — for example, permitting Indonesia to organise and control the electoral process — the Portuguese government has interpreted this refusal as clear evidence that Indonesia is not prepared to discuss in substance the issue of sovereignty.

Since then Portugal has taken a harder line, re-affirming the right of East Timor's people to self-determination, acknowledging with less ambiguity its own international responsibilities, and, more important still, indicating clearly to Indonesia that it will not settle for an agreement which concedes all the issues of principle behind fair words.

Since these developments, for example, Portugal has intervened energetically within the EEC to prevent the EEC raising its representation in Jakarta. In this Lisbon has shown that it is prepared, at least to some degree, to insist on support from its Western allies — who would much prefer to dissociate the question of East Timor from their general relations with Indonesia.

The UN initiative: Where to now?

The relative toughness of Portugal's response casts doubt upon the future of the UN initiative. Both governments have now invested some of their national pride in the talks, by

committing themselves publicly to positions in relation to East Timor which are incompatible with each other. During the UN Human Rights Session in Geneva, the possibility that talks would be broken off altogether was much discussed in the corridors. This appears not to have happened yet, but the new turn to events poses important questions for the Secretary General, who must ask himself whether his initiative can be realistically sustained — but who will also acknowledge that both Portugal and Indonesia are now, in effect, confronting the real issues. If talks proceed, and go anywhere, they will certainly address the substance of the international dispute which East Timor represents: in this sense, they may contain the seed of a real settlement. But the diplomatic risks have become infinitely greater.

VERNON WALTERS VISITS LISBON

by Jill Jolliffe

The US Ambassador to the United Nations, Vernon Walters, said during a recent visit to Lisbon that "East Timor is an issue which should be solved between Portugal and Indonesia, without outside interference".

Walters was on a routine visit to world capitals to discuss the US position on agenda items for the forthcoming UN General Assembly, and was bombarded with questions on East Timor by Portuguese journalists. An accomplished linguist, he conducted all his interviews in Lisbon in Portuguese.

The UN Ambassador said he "perfectly understood" Portuguese interest in a territory whose inhabitants were "once Portuguese" and that it should be recognised that East Timor is "under effective Indonesian control".

In characterising the issue as one to be solved between Portugal and Indonesia, Ambassador Walters was flying in the face of international opinion, which sees East Timor as a decolonisation, not a bilateral issue — in other words, as an issue involving Portugal (the administering power), Indonesia (the invading power) and the people of East Timor (who are claiming the right to self-determination). The issue is treated thus in current talks in

New York under the UN Secretary-General's auspices, and is accepted as such by Portugal, which has supported East Timorese participation in negotiations.

The US abstained in United Nations votes condemning the Indonesian invasion in 1975, but soon afterwards openly sided with Indonesia. American diplomatic and material support for Indonesia — despite the fact that Portugal is a NATO ally — have been instrumental in Indonesia's genocidal war against the East Timorese, and in shaping Western attitudes to the occupation of East Timor.

The US has a political interest in Indonesia as one of the last bastions of anti-communism in South East Asia, but is also concerned to protect its strategic military interest in the Ombai-Wetar straits north of Dili, which are an important passage for US nuclear submarines.

PORTUGUESE COMMISSION REPORTS

The Portuguese parliament has appointed a special Commission to follow the matter of East Timor — the *Comissão Eventual para Acompanhamento da Situação em Timor Leste*.

In mid-November, the Commission's first report was unanimously approved by the Portuguese Parliament. We hope to review the document in a future issue, and summarise its findings here.

The Commission concluded that Indonesia invaded East Timor in clear violation of international law, in disregard of constant assertions that it had no territorial ambitions in East Timor.

Noting that the international community has not recognised the annexation because there has been no genuine consultation of the people of the territory, the report emphasised that evidence continues to emerge of arbitrary arrests, deportations, restrictions on movement and on correspondence, prohibition of assembly and free expression.

With regard to Portugal's own responsibilities, the report states: 'The people of East Timor, in highly significant proportion, reject the Indonesian presence on their territory and continue to expect that Portugal will play an active role in securing their right to self-determination, and that

the international community will maintain its condemnation of the present situation and ensure that the views of the United Nations are respected'.

The Commission reaffirms that Portugal will continue to press for East Timor to be able to choose its future freely, since this is Portugal's duty under international law, under the UN Charter and UN resolutions and under Portugal's own constitution. Successive sessions of parliament had confirmed this position.

Readers who are interested to obtain the report for themselves should write to the Commission at the following address: Assembleia da Republica, Largo das Cortes, 1300 Lisboa, Portugal.

UK PARLIAMENT REPORTS

In February, the British Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee published a report on South East Asia and Indo-China.

The Report covers British policy and relations with regard to the Philippines, Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the countries of Indo-China (Vietnam, Cambodia/Kampuchea and Laos). The Report comments upon and makes recommendations concerning the strategic, political and economic importance of the region and on Britain's interests there.

Indonesia: good relations

In the section devoted to Indonesia, the Report notes that Britain enjoys good relations with Indonesia, though at a low level given that country's size and increasing importance. The Committee then make several recommendations in a section titled *Political issues in UK-Indonesian relations*. It includes paragraphs on East Timor and Irian Jaya, on human rights violations generally within Indonesia, and on the Transmigration Programme — about which the Committee "consider that the criticisms of the transmigration programme which have been brought to our attention justify the UK Government's policy of non-involvement."

East Timor: oppose recognition

The Committee's recommendation concerning East Timor is expressed very clearly (in bold below). The Committee reported as follows:

"Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor, following their invasion in 1975 after Portuguese withdrawal, has never been recognised by the United Kingdom or by other European Community governments. Australia (who, as neighbours, can be regarded as being the Western government most directly concerned) has however accorded recognition. ASEAN countries accept Indonesian sovereignty. Armed resistance to Indonesian control continues, but reports differ as to the strength of rebel forces. The British Government's position, in common with other Community members, is that the issue is one for bilateral negotiation between Portugal and Indonesia and that the efforts of the UN Secretary-General to facilitate the process of negotiation should be supported. The Secretary-General's initiative was begun in 1983. It is clear that Britain must continue to refuse to accept the forcible annexation of East Timor and reject Indonesian sovereignty until an agreement is reached with all parties, including genuine East Timorese representatives.

"Separate issues arise from criticisms voiced over Indonesia's policies inside East Timor since 1975. The task of establishing control has involved substantial military operations against those resisting Indonesian rule. Very large numbers of casualties and disappearances among the local population were reported at the time of the invasion and have been reported since, though recent suggestions are that the situation has improved. Low level conflict does continue, however, as do allegations concerning the operations of Indonesian troops (including allegations of torture). These issues were raised by the British Prime Minister during her visit to Indonesia in 1985 and these discussions may have been a contributory factor in the successful negotiations for subsequent improved access by the Red Cross to East Timor."

Conclusion: pragmatic

Overall, nonetheless, the Committee concludes that neither these concerns, nor British criticisms of Indonesian government policies on other matters mentioned, should cause Britain to restrict its relations with Jakarta. They concluded as follows:

"The above paragraphs illustrate a number of issues where Indonesian policies have led to criticism. Where British policy is directly involved — as on East Timor and the transmigration problem — we have suggested lines of policy which we consider should be followed. However, the question arises

of whether the various points of difficulty, taken together, should be regarded as sufficiently grave to discourage the maintenance of friendly relations

with Indonesia altogether, as some human rights campaigners would like. We are sure that this would not be appropriate. Certainly every opportunity should be taken to ensure

that the Indonesian government is fully aware of outside concerns, and we believe that on the whole the British Government already do this. We also support a restrictive policy on arms sales. *But it would be misleading to suggest that the Indonesian regime is one which is fundamentally flawed in a way or to an extent which other countries are not and which should*

prevent us from conducting friendly and improving relations."

Foreign Affairs Committee, South East Asia and Indo-China (114 pages), House of Commons Paper No. 114, available from HM Stationary Office, price £9.70.

INTERNATIONAL ROUND-UP

Open Letter to Pope John Paul II

In November 1986, Pope John Paul II visited Australia during a mammoth visit to Asia. He did not meet any official representatives of the East Timorese church during this trip.

However, Australia now has an established and vigorous East Timorese community. Though they were not given an opportunity to speak with the Pope directly, members of the community wrote an 'Open Letter to his Holiness', which we reproduce below.

It will be remembered that, when Pope John Paul II visited Lisbon in 1982, he said a Mass in Tetum for the Timorese community. Since that time, he has met the Apostolic Administrators of Timor several times and made well-publicised remarks expressing concern about the situation.

"Your Holiness,

This letter of petition comes to you from the East Timorese community in Australia on the occasion of your historic visit to our second home, our refuge from the tragic conflict in our beloved country.

As the largest Timorese community outside East Timor, we have earnestly looked forward to your visit as an opportunity to grasp the hand of hope that you offer and seek your renewed support for our suffering brothers and sisters in East Timor. To our great disappointment, however, it has not been possible to arrange for our representatives to meet you personally on this occasion.

We had hoped that Monsignor Carlos Belo, who administers the Catholic Church in East Timor on your behalf, would be able to visit Australia as a guest of the Australian Bishops during your tour. When the Australian Bishops declined to issue an invitation to Mgr Belo we wrote twice to Mgr Brian Walsh, the national papal tour organiser, requesting a few minutes for our community representatives here to meet you, or failing that, to meet with one of your senior aides. The refusal of these requests has left us with no alternative but to address you in the

form of this open letter.

Your Holiness, the last ten years have been the blackest in our history. In that short period, over 100,000 East Timorese have died from war and related causes, our way of life has been destroyed, and our fundamental rights to freedom and self-determination trampled on with impunity. This bitter experience has turned our people increasingly to the Church for support and protection as in countries like Poland where identity and traditions are threatened. In East Timor Church membership has doubled.

The Catholic Church recognises East Timor to be a territory in dispute. The Diocese of Dili is administered directly from Rome and run by an Apostolic Administrator. It is not attached to the Indonesian Bishops' Conference.

In 1984 Your Holiness said, 'The Holy See continues to follow the situation in East Timor with preoccupation and with the hope that particular consideration will be given in every circumstance to the ethnic, religious and cultural identity of the people...It is the ardent wish of the Holy See to see that all rights of individuals be respected and that every effort be made to lighten the sufferings of the people.' Last year your Apostolic Administrator, Mgr Belo, made a special visit to the Vatican to urgently explore ways of resolving the conflict. He reported that Your Holiness had urged him 'to work for the Church, to fight the suffering of the people and to seek for a right solution for peace in East Timor.'

Regrettably, however, your words have fallen on deaf ears for the situation is unchanged and a 'right solution for peace' remains an elusive dream.

Inside East Timor over 10,000 Indonesian troops continue to press their military campaign and, internationally, governments, with only a few notable exceptions, have abandoned us in their pursuit of commercial and military contracts with Indonesia.

But we refuse to believe that nothing can be done, that a just peace in our own country is impossible, that the children of Timor have to submit to another generation of trauma and conflict.

There is an alternative to violence and political expediency and, furthermore, the international community has the means to implement this alternative.

As our spiritual leader, we ask Your Holiness to articulate this alternative once again, firstly by strongly defending our people's rights, including their right as human beings to make their own decisions and to be East Timorese, and then by impressing on the international community the necessity for a just solution based on our internationally recognised right to self-determination.

The only path to peace in Timor is the path of principle. It is our sincere belief that a clear enunciation of these principles by the international Catholic Church, under Your Holiness' leadership, would breathe new life into the United Nations' process being pursued by the Secretary General and significantly advance the cause of peace for our people.

The memory of countless dead relatives, friends and patriots and the needs of the living will fill our hearts during attendance at the Masses celebrated by Your Holiness in Australia.

It would be an unforgettable comfort for us and our people in East Timor if, on these occasions, Your Holiness were able to offer a public prayer of petition for East Timor, particularly during your celebration of the Eucharist on 29 November in Darwin, the point in your visit closest to our homeland.

We pray that God will bless your visit to Australia abundantly." It is reported that Pope John Paul did finally speak briefly and informally with Father Francisco Fernandes, who is the chaplain to Perth's East Timorese community and is himself Timorese.

TIMORESE PRISONERS' FUND

A new and potentially important initiative has been announced in Australia.

Groups engaged in solidarity with East Timor have undertaken to collect funds for distribution to the prisoners from East Timor who are being held in Indonesian prisons.

Detainees, whether they are held in East Timor or in Indonesian prisons elsewhere in the archipelago, do not always have access to food parcels or assistance from relatives. Some are in real need. Attention has been drawn to their plight by Amnesty International, which is concerned that some detainees — notably those held in Cipinang prison in Jakarta — are not being provided with adequate nutrition as required by the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

The Fund will also work to heighten public awareness of the plight of prisoners, and for the release of all those who are held by reason of their political beliefs.

If you wish to make a contribution, write to: Timorese Prisoners' Fund, c/o the Australia East Timor Association, PO Box 93, Fitzroy 3065, Australia.

We hope to publish the account number for the Fund, and details about how to transfer money from outside Australia, in a future issue.

Third Consultation of Christian Groups, Geneva

Over the weekend of February 14-15, Christian groups met in Geneva for the Third Christian Consultation on East Timor. It was convened by Swiss Pax Christi, and sponsored by the Dutch Justice & Peace Commission and the Flemish Justice and Peace Commission, which convened the first and second Consultations in Holland in 1985 and 1986. CIIR has also been closely associated with this initiative.

The next Consultation will be held at the end of this year or the beginning of 1988, it is hoped in Lisbon.

As in past years, this meeting was private. Its purpose is to permit

different groups within the Christian churches to meet together, to learn more about the situation in East Timor, to share their preoccupations, and seek to resolve the difficulties they face in dealing with an issue which involves fundamental moral concerns and also complex and important relations with other churches.

The discussions on this occasion were sometimes difficult, reflecting the different responsibilities and activities of those present, who included representatives from national churches, international institutions, and organisations primarily concerned with human rights issues.

About twenty organisations were present, including several observers.

Reflection published

No report of the discussion will be made public. However the Consultation agreed that its sponsoring organisations should publish the text of a *Reflection*, drafted at the Second Consultation and submitted to all who participated, and to many other organisations in the churches of Europe, the United States and Asia.

A copy of the *Reflection* is enclosed with this issue of *East Timor Link*.

In publishing this document, we did not intend merely to put into print our own feelings and concerns. We hope all those who have some concern for what has happened in East Timor, will use it to stimulate discussion, to provoke criticisms and generate support.

In particular, those who approve the text are invited to write to CIIR or fill in the prepared slip at the end of the *Reflection*. If you can publicly support the text, this is especially welcome. If you cannot, please make sure that this is clear to CIIR when you write.

(If you should want to order extra copies, write to CIIR at 22, Coleman Fields, London N1 7AF, United Kingdom. Readers living nearer to Australia than Britain may prefer to write to Australian Justice & Peace, which is publishing a separate edition. Prices as published.)

EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY MEETING

The next meeting of European solidarity groups working on East Timor is scheduled to take place in Gottingen, West Germany, at the end of March.

It is one of a series of meetings, involving European groups from

France, Belgium, the Netherlands, the Nordic countries, Germany, Austria, Spain, the United Kingdom and Portugal.

Austria

The Osterreichisches Komitee fur Osttimor has begun a newsletter: the first issue was published in November. It is available from: Jagdschlossgasse 42/4, 1130 Wien, Austria.

ASIA

Hong Kong

In December, the Hong Kong East Timor Concern Group published the first issue of its newsletter.

It is destined primarily for readers in Asia, but others who wish to subscribe can inquire c/o Centre for the Progress of Peoples, 48 Princess Margaret Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

East Timor Link is published at least four times a year by the Catholic Institute for International Relations, in association with A Paz e Possivel em Timor Leste in Portugal.

We invite readers to make a subscription towards our costs, of £5.00 for individuals and £10.00 for institutions. All subscriptions run from January to December.

We welcome correspondence.

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