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Economic crisis threatens Suharto reign

Deep crisis in the Indonesian economy has led to strong criticisms of President Suharto for failing to provide leadership when it is most needed. With a presidential election due in March there are now open calls for Suharto to stand down. East Timor's future is bound up in the outcome.

The instability in Indonesia's economy was set in train by investors' reactions to a budget which, according to the *Financial Times* on 9 January, 'openly flout[ed] targets laid down by the IMF'. On 8 January the country's currency, the rupiah, tumbled to a new low – 10,000 to the US dollar, a quarter of its 1997 value. Panic set in among investors, banks and financial institutions, and among the general public.

Political discontent

Although a US\$33 billion bail-out deal was agreed, the crisis has led to calls for Suharto to move aside, some from people previously loyal to the first family such as Amien Rais, the leader of the Muslim organisation Muhammadiyah. The National Brotherhood Foundation suggested that the People's Consultative Assembly, the state organ empowered to elect the president, should not re-nominate Suharto, although he has confirmed he will be standing. Similar views have been echoed across the world in leading financial newspapers and journals, such as the *Financial Times*.

However, Suharto is unlikely to let go easily and, if his nomination is supported, he will almost certainly be re-elected for a seventh term since he is supported by both Golkar, the

leading political party, and the army. However, as the economic downturn begins to bite, the political discontent is likely to mount. If millions of jobs disappear, as is predicted (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 29 January 1998 p17), and the vast numbers of poor become even worse off, people are likely to take to the streets. Corruption, cronyism and a history of commercial favours to Suharto's family will feed popular resentment against the leader.

Impact on Timor

According to Nobel prize winner, José Ramos Horta, 'Pro-democracy and human rights groups within Indonesia are speaking out more and more on the issue of East Timor, linking the oppression there to that which exists under Suharto.' There was, he said, 'a distinct change of perception, coupled with a new political will to address the East Timor conflict. Clear evidence of this comes from the dedicated efforts throughout the year by the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, and his special representative on East Timor, Jamsheed Marker, as well as the attention given to the issue by South Africa's president, Nelson Mandela.'

It would be difficult, even for Suharto, to disregard the recommendations of someone of Mandela's stature. Indeed, exchanges between the two during Suharto's recent visit to South Africa are believed to have been encouraging for the East Timorese cause, although precise details remain under wraps. Mandela has also called for the release and involvement in talks of East Timor's resistance leader, Xanana Gusmão. Ramos-Horta was inspired by Mandela's involvement to appeal to the Timorese resistance to refrain from further violence.

Rights abuses

However, since the resolution on Indonesia was passed at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) in April 1997, there have been more human rights violations in East Timor. The UN's special rapporteur on torture has not been invited to East Timor, as was recommended, nor has any ground been made in establishing an on-site human rights monitoring team. Similarly, there has been no

reduction in the numbers of Indonesian troops in the territory.

The momentum for change established in 1997 – by Britain on the diplomatic front, and by the US government on arms sales – must be kept up. With Britain holding the presidency of the European Union in the first half of 1998, Europe-based activists should press the British foreign secretary, Robin Cook, to continue playing a constructive role, and should try to maximise the use of the EU Common Position on East Timor (see box on page 6). The proposed visit to East Timor by British, Dutch and Austrian ambassadors should happen as soon as possible, preferably before the UNCHR's 54th session starts on 16 March.

Meanwhile, governments and international financial institutions could make any future rescue deals for Indonesia dependent on political reforms to encourage greater democracy, improve human rights, and establish accountability. ■

Summary

This issue of *Timor Link* reflects on the crisis which has hit the Indonesian economy at the beginning of 1998 and the threat it poses to President Suharto's rule. The deeper the economic downturn, the greater the chances of social unrest, and the possibility of political movement over East Timor. We argue that any financial rescue packages for Indonesia should be tied to guarantees of political reform and improvements in human rights.

Also in this issue, medical student Rachel Foster reports on the failings of the Indonesian government's health system in East Timor, and Sharon Scharfe examines Canada's arms export policy and the country's increasing profile among those lobbying for change. Hugh Dowson reports on the latest developments in attempts to lift the veil on the Balibo killings and we reprint Bishop Belo's appeal at the All-inclusive Intra-East Timorese Dialogue, and Cardinal Basil Hume's statement on the anniversary of the invasion of East Timor.

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Failing health

East Timor has one of the highest incidences of tuberculosis in the world. Many people die of malaria, malnutrition is widespread, and diarrhoea, chest infections and intestinal parasites cause great suffering. By meeting patients, doctors and healthcare workers, a group of medical students from Glasgow University, Scotland, saw first hand the failure of the Indonesian government's health services, and witnessed the efforts of some individuals to improve things. RACHEL FOSTER, one of the students, reports.

The fact that people in East Timor travel huge distances to receive care at Catholic clinics rather than attend the *puskesmas* (government clinics) in their villages illustrates the widespread lack of trust there is of government services. This may be prompted by cases of enforced contraception and other human rights violations, although we did not see evidence of such extreme malpractice.

Fear

However, we did see that a failure to explain treatments, especially family planning practices, undermines trust and breeds fear, particularly among East Timorese women. This lack of trust creates a vicious circle. The *puskesmas* often run out of medicine, or hand out medicine that is ineffective, such as antibiotic courses that are too short or drugs that are out of date. So people use the government health services only as a last resort. Often patients die in *puskesmas* or hospitals.

Compassion and resources

Most doctors working in *puskesmas* are non-Timorese, doing a three year tour of duty after graduating from medical school. They have no experience, limited resources and little knowledge of the local language and culture, but are given sole responsibility for the clinics. Despite this unenviable position, some Indonesian doctors showed a blatant lack of compassion. For example, only the help of a neighbour and visiting doctor saved the life of one woman we saw, who, bleeding severely after giving birth at home, was refused treatment at Dili hospital.

Until recently, there were no Timorese doctors working in East Timor but now there are 14 practising and five soon to graduate from medical school. They are trusted and appreciated, even when they work within the government system. Scholarships to train more Timorese doctors would greatly improve the situation.

Despite looking impressive, many *puskesmas* lack human and material resources, although this does not appear to be due to a lack of funding. Money seemed to be leaking out of the system at every level, whereas Catholic clinics, which receive their medicines from overseas donors, were better stocked and sometimes helped the *puskesmas* with supplies. On the other hand, two Catholic clinics we visited borrowed staff from the *puskesmas*. One had no trained sisters of its own, but patients were happy to be treated by *puskesmas* staff within the Catholic clinic.

Puskesmas are given incentives to carry out certain programmes, such as the family planning programme, and immunising children, and consequently tend to concentrate on these tasks rather than on treating malaria or dealing with infections and heart attacks.

Traditional beliefs

There is little health education work, apart from heavy advertising campaigns for immunisation and contraception, so people sometimes fail to seek help when they should because traditional beliefs about a certain disease tell them they are bound to die. But people could be taught in their own language about health issues and the use of modern and traditional remedies. Educating women in particular has been recognised as a key to improving the health of the community.

One Catholic clinic used 'motivators' (Timorese women working as health workers) to try to take the limited health care resources to the people who need them most. Put in charge of about 20 families in a community, the women have no responsibility for administering medicine – which attracts unwanted attention from the military who think they are assisting Fretilin – but they do look out for malnourished children or infections and bring them to the attention of the clinic. These women could also provide effective health education.

Because of its trusted position, the Catholic church could meet some of the social and medical needs of the people, but lack of organisation and a reluctance to change are preventing it from doing more. There have been teams of visiting specialists who try to tackle surgical cases which fall outside the healthcare system. Ultimately, however, East Timor's health system will only improve with a change in the wider political situation. ■

Medical students from the University of Glasgow visited East Timor in August 1997. They visited a 'puskesmas', the government hospital and a Catholic clinic in the capital, Dili, and travelled to rural villages, where they talked to local and Indonesian doctors.

Drought brings threat of famine

Hunger is again threatening lives in East Timor as drought compounds the legacy of the Indonesian occupation

José Ramos-Horta has appealed for international assistance as famine takes hold in parts of East Timor. The Nobel laureate said the food supply on the north coast of the territory is under threat from the drought which has been affecting the region for months. Famine could set in if the rains fail, putting tens of thousands of people at risk. Already farmers have been drawing on seed stocks for food, which will leave them short for planting.

The island of Atauro, 20 km north of Dili, and neighbouring Kambing Island, both home to around 7,000 people, are badly affected. Food shortages have developed in the past three months, with aid workers reporting that people are becoming lethargic from hunger, and schools closing early because the pupils are half starving.

Kompas reported (28 January 1998) that 10 tons of rice were delivered to Atauro island in

response to the crisis. The paper reported on 10 February that the US had donated US\$25,000 to help with the shortage. This is likely to be spent on corn seeds, medicines, rice, sugar, cooking oil, soap and other basics.

The Indonesian government is already hard pressed, responding to droughts and food shortages elsewhere. The *Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER)* reports drought claiming more than 1,000 lives in Irian Jaya, with a further 800,000 at risk. Cases of malaria have risen, exacerbating the situation still further.

The immediate cause of the problem is El Niño, the Pacific Ocean current which has been affecting the climate around the world. Food crops have been severely affected, even destroyed in some areas. According to *FEER* (December-January 1998), economists predict that millions of Indonesians will be 'dragged back below the poverty line', with malnutrition and infant mortality increasing in Eastern Indonesia.

With economic crisis already ravaging livelihoods in East and South East Asia, the drought could take a particularly heavy toll on the East Timorese rural economy, where food production, traditionally of maize and rice, was severely affected by the Indonesian occupation.

The invasion saw families moved off their traditional farmlands and away from their livelihoods. Population growth as a result of Indonesia's transmigration policy has also meant that indigenous Timorese have been moved away from the best land, and a larger population has to feed itself from land impoverished by war, deforestation and other forms of environmental destruction. The presence of large numbers of Indonesian soldiers, not themselves engaged in production, increases the demand for food. The legacy of the past 23 years is combining with natural catastrophe to potentially devastating effect. ■



Better times behind: East Timorese farmers in Suai during the 1996 harvest.

CUP

New organisation in East Timor attracts governor's wrath

Members of a new group which aims to break the diplomatic log-jam over East Timor have run into resistance from the governor.

A new organisation, called Movement for the Reconciliation and Unity of the People of East Timor (MRUPTL) was formed inside East Timor in October 1997. According to reports, it gathers together several East Timorese political leaders, including members of Apodeti, which originally supported integration with Indonesia in 1975. It appears that the inspiration behind MRUPTL was frustration at the limited participation and agenda of the All-inclusive Intra-East Timorese Dialogue (AIETD).

Referendum

The organisation favours a referendum on the future of East Timor, and is headed up by Manuel Carrascalao, a brother of former East Timorese governor, Mario Carrascalao. As such, for the Apodeti members involved, it represents a potentially significant political shift, since many of them were perceived as close to the Indonesian military, and enjoyed government positions after 1975. Carrascalao himself was a member of Golkar, the dominant Indonesian political party.

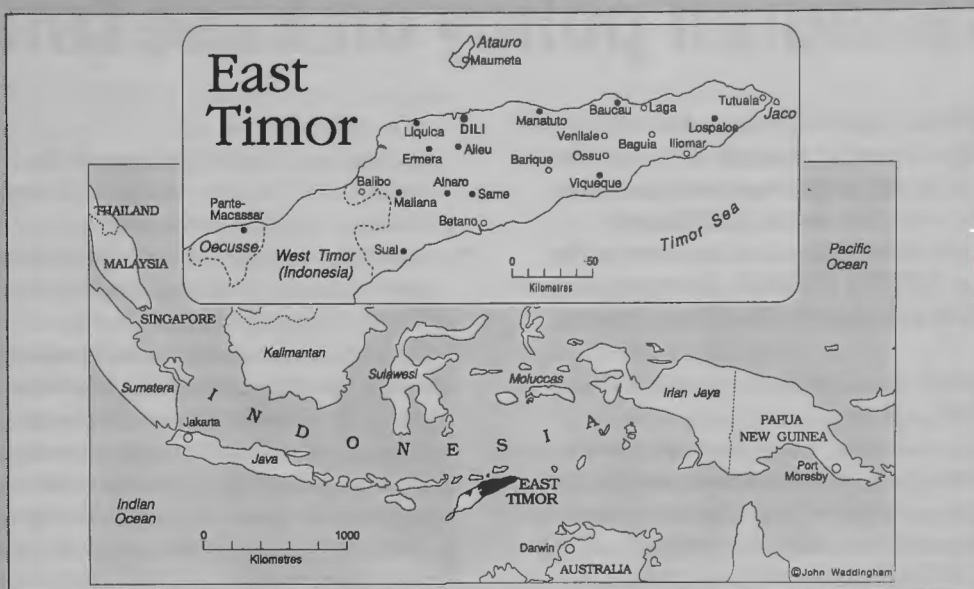
The secretary of MRUPTL, Francisco Carvalho, a former private secretary to the governor, has said that the new organisation is a 'moral movement aimed at uniting the people of East Timor', since throughout the 21 year integration, 'the government has failed to unite the people'. The organisation apparently hoped to enter into dialogue with the administration, the armed forces and other bodies, seeking the best possible solution for East Timor.

Criticism

Not surprisingly therefore, it has already drawn fierce criticism from governor Abilio Osorio Soares, who has allegedly called for the arrest of some of its members.

In an interview with the Portuguese daily, *Publico*, Carrascalao defends his stance. Asked why the MRUPTL was established, he said that the Indonesians had worked through terror tactics, which had caused only unhappiness amongst Timorese. The organisation aimed to resolve the East Timorese impasse by fostering unity. It was reported in the *Jakarta Post* of 5 January that Bishop Belo has urged the government of Indonesia to dialogue with the group. However, the authorities appear to remain sceptical.

Meanwhile, Carrascalao has appealed to the United Nations to send an independent team to evaluate the new organisation's political stance. ■



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 began decolonising East Timor. Newly formed political parties discussed options for the future. The Timorese Democratic Union (UDT) initially favoured federation with Portugal but then formed a coalition with Fretilin, the nationalist liberation movement, 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. After a fraudulent 'act of self-determination' in May 1976, East Timor was declared to be Indonesia's '27th Province' in July 1976. The United Nations regards the annexation as illegal.

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.

Canadian policy on East Timor: All talk?

In the early 1980s Canada voted against UN General Assembly resolutions on East Timor. But in recent years it has slowly become more proactive, and in 1997 Canada became more outspoken than ever on the issue. SHARON SCHARFE, Secretary of Parliamentarians for East Timor, reports.

Canada's contributions to East Timor's cause in 1997 included:

- announcing an all-party parliamentary delegation to visit Indonesia and East Timor to examine the human rights situation first-hand (re-scheduled for 1998 because of the 1997 federal election)
- together with the European Union in April, tabling a successful resolution on East Timor at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR)
- foreign minister Axworthy visiting Jakarta in July to tell Indonesia's President Suharto and foreign minister Alatas of Canada's concern about human rights violations in East Timor and its desire to see a resolution

involving all parties

- contributing Can\$30,000 towards the UN-sponsored All Inclusive Intra-East Timorese Dialogue (AIETD), in October
- Axworthy meeting UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, for a briefing on UN progress on East Timor, in October
- Canada's ambassador to the UN making a strong opening statement in November at the UN General Assembly's Third Committee on escalating human rights violations in East Timor, in which he referred to Canada's desire for 'a just, lasting and internationally-acceptable solution' for all parties involved
- continuing to be the third largest aid donor to East Timor, supporting many small-scale projects run by the Timorese.

These initiatives, however, contrast with the continued sale of military goods from Canada to Indonesia (shown in the table) while it engages in genocidal actions against the peoples of East Timor. Although there have been no military export permits issued to Canadian companies

since the Dili Massacre in 1991, and will not be for as long as Indonesia remains in East Timor, it is still incongruent for Canada to express concern over human rights violations while continuing to supply the perpetrators with military goods. Currently Canadian military goods sold to Indonesia are primarily to replace parts on equipment that was sold in the past, with the Indonesian navy being the primary purchaser of such goods. Their value in total bilateral trade is minimal.

Canada's foreign minister should make it his policy to disallow further exports of military goods to Indonesia so long as Indonesia remains illegally in East Timor, in violation of two UN Security Council resolutions and eight General Assembly resolutions. Halting all future exports of military goods to Indonesia would allow Canada to advocate similar action and gain support from its allies. Only through a concerted international effort, in conjunction and cooperation with the UN, will the peoples of East Timor finally realise their inherent right to self-determination. ■

CANADIAN MILITARY EXPORTS TO INDONESIA

(Summary compiled from information obtained from Information Requests filed with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Figures in Can\$)

YEAR	VALUE OF PERMITS	PERMIT TYPES*	TOTAL VALUE OF SALES
1988	**	3 Permits: 7005, 7011	**
		2 Permits:	
1989	**	7010, 2010	**
		3 Permits:	
1990	**	2011, 2015	**
1991	\$3,780,082	6 Permits: 2011, 2010, 2010 2011, 2011	\$580,963
1992	Nil	0 Permits	Nil
1993	\$10,000,000	1 Permit: 2009	\$0,00
1994	\$5,506,926	3 Permits: 2010, 2010, 2010	\$1,244,042
1995	\$362,380,101	6 Permits: 2010, 2010, 2014 2009, 2010, 2005	\$0,00
1996	\$32,285,205.86	5 Permits: 2010, 2010, 2006 2014, 2010	\$1,638,426.00
Jan.-June 1997	\$3,250,000.00	4 Permits: 2010, 2010, 2011 2010	(Not yet known)

* For definition of Permit Numbers, see right.

** Note: An Access to Information request was filed with DFAIT on 28 April 1995, regarding Canadian military export permits for goods destined to Indonesia for the period 1975-95. The department responded that data retrieval on the issuance of export permits was computerised in October 1988; collection of information on actual export sales of military goods was systematised in 1990. Earlier records are less reliable. The 20 permits of which records are available together total Can\$22,256,369. In general, the value of actual sales normally represents only a fraction of the value of permits issued; the ratio is often as low as 10 per cent.

MILITARY PERMIT NUMBER – DEFINITION

Military Export Permit Number	Category Description
7005	Fire control, and related alerting and warning equipment, and related systems specially designed for military use, and specially designed components.
7010	Aircraft and helicopters, unmanned.
7011	Electronic equipment specially designed for military use, and specially designed components.
NOTE: New categorisation system begins in 1989.	
2005	Fire control radars, range finding sensors, ballistic computers and related alerting and warning equipment specially designed for military use, and parts and components.
2006	Vehicles and related equipment specially designed or modified for military use, and specially designed components.
2009	Military vessels and specially designed parts and components such as engines, navigation systems and sonar equipment.
2010	Military aircraft and helicopters, including transport aircraft, aero-engines, parachutes and related parts and components.
2011	Electronic equipment for military use such as communications equipment and radar systems.
2014	Specialised equipment for military training or for simulating military scenarios, such as computerised trainers, aircraft and vehicle simulators, components and accessories.
2015	Imaging or imaging countermeasure equipment, including photographic, thermal imaging equipment and specially designed components.

Bishops call for ceasefire

The Third All-inclusive Intra-East Timorese Dialogue (AIETD) took place in Austria in late October 1997. As usual, political questions were precluded from the agenda and participants from East Timor were under heavy pressure from the Indonesian military not to rock the boat. As usual, participants had difficulty agreeing a statement, although the bishops of East Timor submitted the following strong statement, calling for a ceasefire and an end to torture by the Indonesian armed forces.

This is what the bishops' statement said.

Appeal

We, the Bishops of East Timor, resolute in our desire to preserve and defend the martyred people of East Timor against the scourge of war, which twice in the space of a human life has brought us horrors and individual suffering, and profoundly conscious of

- our faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and value of the human person
- the obligation of governments of states to establish the necessary conditions for the maintenance of justice and peace, freedom, tolerance, of solidarity and of economic development and social progress

- the guarantee of respect, on the part of all states, of the obligations incumbent on good neighbourly relations between peoples and nations
- the urgency and necessity of adopting effective and commonly acceptable ways, by peaceful means, to develop peace initiatives in conformity with the principles of justice and international law
- developing friendly relations between nations, in this globalising world, with the basic principle of mutual respect, respect for the equality of rights, respect for self-determination, and the independence of peoples
- promoting national, regional and international cooperation aimed towards the resolution of economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems
- stimulating respect for rights, for freedoms, and fundamental guarantees for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion
- guaranteeing, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that force is not resorted to, and
- establishing an atmosphere of religious freedom, of the freedom of assembly and to organise free from censure, or political and military oppression, where the human person's inalienable rights and dignity would

- be respected and assuming, fully,
- the values of freedom, justice, peace and of tolerance and reconciliation
- the defence of the primacy of the human person against all alienation

We appeal,

1. That through this third AIETD under the auspices of the United Nations
 - a) the armed forces of the republic of Indonesia (ABRI) and the groups of East Timorese favourable to integration; and
 - b) the armed forces of liberation of East Timor (Falintil) and Timorese groups which defend self-determination and independence;
 between them, opt for a definitive ceasefire, so as to create the means and necessary confidence for a just, comprehensive and globally acceptable solution for the question of East Timor;
2. To the government of Indonesia to instruct elements of the armed forces stationed in East Timor, to obey the law, and definitively to cease torture in prisons, a practice which is diametrically opposed to the principles of Pancasila.

*Carlos Filipe X Belo SDB
Apostolic Administrator of Dili
Krumbach, Austria, 23 October 1997*

Diplomatic round-up

Tripartite Talks

A third round of talks at ambassadorial level took place between the governments of Portugal and Indonesia on 7 November 1997. The talks were chaired by UN secretary-general Kofi Annan's special representative, Jamsheed Marker.

Third AIETD

The third All-inclusive Intra-East Timorese Dialogue took place in Krumbach, Austria, from 20–23 October 1997. The dialogue is regarded by the UN as complementary to the Tripartite Talks, and not a parallel negotiating track. The AIETD provides, in the words of Jamsheed Marker, 'a unique forum for the East Timorese to make practical contributions to the search for a solution'.

Attending the meeting were five new East Timorese participants, including two women, bringing the number of women participants to three. Ines Almeida presented two reports on the violation of women's rights in East Timor. The final communiqué from the meeting, which had dealt mainly with a proposal for a cultural centre, referred to the need for the protection of the rights of women and young people. The final declaration noted that the name, objectives, organic structure and founding sources for the Centre for Culture and Development Timor Lorosae had been agreed.

Statement by Cardinal Basil Hume on the 22nd anniversary of the invasion of East Timor

During his visit to London this year Bishop Belo, apostolic administrator of Dili, East Timor, and Nobel laureate, spoke movingly of the plight of his people after 22 years of Indonesian rule. His overriding concern was that there can be no solution to the problem of East Timor while the people of that country live under occupation. The sense of threat from the occupying forces needs to be lifted, he said, by their 'drastic reduction, even complete withdrawal'.

He spoke constructively about the means of finding the way forward. He stressed the need for respect for the dignity of the human person and of peoples. He underlined how important it is that the United Nations is permitted to play its full and proper role in helping to create a non-threatening environment in which confidence can grow. Above all, he called for a dialogue, a willingness on all sides for change, and a spirit of reconciliation. I heartily support Bishop Belo's efforts for peace and justice.

Sadly, I understand that since Bishop Belo's visit here there has not been any discernible

improvement. Violence has been used by both sides. I have been informed that only two weeks ago soldiers fired on unarmed students in Dili, severely injuring three. The spirit of reconciliation requires respect for human rights, and an end to violence on all sides, which Bishop Belo and others have recently called for. Arms supplies to Indonesia require particular attention. Bishop Belo said: 'Restrict still further the conditions under which such trade is permitted.'

I welcome recent moves by the British government to review its trade and arms sales policy and hope that internationally this, and other measures, will be pursued. I welcome efforts to raise Christian awareness in this country and other western countries of the situation in East Timor, and to promote prayer and support for the church there. And I welcome efforts to promote human development in East Timor which helps the people to participate in shaping their future.

*Cardinal Basil Hume
7 December 1997*

* For an in-depth analysis of the meeting, Timor Link readers are referred to Ines Almeida's report, available on the website of ETRA, Australia, <http://www.Pactok.net.au.au/docs/et> ■

UK and France put forward EU Code of Conduct on arms sales

Last year the international arms trade was worth US\$40 billion. The EU accounts for 40 per cent of this trade. All too often, concerns for human rights, development and regional security take second place to economic considerations. However, the EU states have a chance to change this says STEVE SHROPSHIRE, analyst at Saferworld. Last May, the UK government announced that it would push for an EU Code of Conduct on arms sales which would 'set high common standards'. Following months of bilateral negotiations, the UK and France have now drawn up a joint proposal for such a Code. The proposal has been circulated to the other member states and will be formally discussed by the Council of Ministers before being agreed at the General Affairs Council in May 1998.

The preamble to the Code sets out its aims as being to increase transparency and restraint. The proposal is a step forward and is, therefore, a welcome move. However, the principles of transparency and restraint are not clearly borne out in the current proposal. Moreover, there are a number of loopholes in the export guidelines. The proposal needs straightening if the Code is to meet its objectives.

Consultation mechanisms

The proposal contains some basic consultation mechanisms for when one member state wishes to export equipment for which a licence has been denied by another member state. However, notification of an intention to undercut is limited to bilateral consultations between the member state issuing the denial and the member state seeking to grant the same licence. This will do little to facilitate the development of 'high common standards'. Consultation should be multilateral.

Export guidelines

The guidelines expand on the eight common EU criteria agreed in 1991-92 which take into account human rights, development, regional security and the commitments of the member states. Whilst being a fairly comprehensive expansion of these criteria, the Code says only that these guidelines should be taken into account when considering an arms sale, rather than clearly stating where arms should be denied, or when there should be a presumption of denial.

The guidelines also contain some serious loopholes. For example, the human rights guidelines state: 'The attitude of recipient States towards relevant human rights instruments should also be taken into account although non-adherence should not preclude countries from receiving arms.' The caveat that 'non-adherence

should not preclude countries from receiving arms' obviates the preceding statement of concern. The member states' commitment to human rights must be questioned if such a disclaimer remains.

The guidelines are also flawed where they state that licences will not be granted for the export of 'equipment which has obvious application for internal repression [...] unless the end-use of the equipment is judged to be legitimate, such as protection of members of the security forces from violence'. Such a loophole would mean that repressive states could continue to receive paramilitary, police and riot control equipment, as long as they argue it is for the protection of their police forces. The meaningful protection of human rights should mean that equipment which has an obvious application for internal repression, should be denied to repressive regimes.

Parliamentary scrutiny

Despite the declared aim of increasing transparency, the Code makes no reference to parliamentary scrutiny of arms exports. The lessons from the Scott Report were that a rigorous system of parliamentary scrutiny is needed. Such a system, similar to that operating in Sweden, should be adopted by all member states as an adjunct to the Code.

Additional measures

The proposal requires that the member states examine the scope for harmonising their export control procedures. But it does not elaborate on what this should involve. In this respect, it is essential that the member states take action to strengthen and harmonise end-use certification and monitoring procedures and establish effective controls over arms brokering agents.

Controls on end use

The BMARC scandal, when arms supposedly destined for Singapore were re-exported to Iran, demonstrated the need for effective end-use controls and monitoring. Current procedures for establishing and monitoring end-use within the EU are woefully inadequate. A rigorous system would be one where the end-use agreement has the status of a legally binding contract. It should include a clause which would result in the breaking of the contract if the goods are found to have been used for proscribed purposes.

A system of follow-up checks should also be provided to ensure that exported goods remain with their stated end user and are not diverted for proscribed purposes. These checks could be carried out by consular officials.

Third party brokering

The problems of arms brokers have been well

documented. NGOs, including Amnesty and Oxfam, are particularly concerned with the issue of brokering, which in many countries, including the UK, allows individuals in effect to circumvent national laws on arms exports. This was highlighted when UK based firm Mil Tec, registered in the Isle of Man, evaded UK controls, and a UN arms embargo, to broker a deal for light weapons and ammunition to Rwanda during the genocide.

Accordingly, there should be no entities which are exempt from export licensing obligations. Brokers that contravene the export control laws of the country in which they are based should be prosecuted, whether or not the arms pass through EU territory. Member states should also establish a central register of all brokering agents.

Next steps

Whilst the proposal is not as rigorous as hoped for, other member states may table parallel proposals which could strengthen the Code. Indeed, the UK Foreign Office has indicated that it would welcome this. The Italian government has already drafted a proposal calling for an annual review of the Code's implementation. In addition, given the Belgian government's reforms of national legislation pertaining to arms brokering agents, NGOs are looking to the Belgian government to table a proposal in this area.

An EU Code will be agreed by the end of the UK's EU presidency. This should not be seen as the end of the process. NGOs across Europe are already gearing up to re-focus their efforts on monitoring their governments' arms export practices to see how they implement the Code; pushing for additional measures such as those outlined above; and calling on the EU to use the Code as a building block for a wider international code of conduct.

- A full critique of the UK/France Code proposal, published by Amnesty International's International Secretariat, Amnesty International UK Section, BASIC, Oxfam and Saferworld is obtainable from Saferworld at 33 Alfred Place, London WC1E 7DP.

EU Common Position

EU Policy on East Timor: Fulfilling the potential of the Common Position, by Eilis Ward, argues that the EU Common Position can provide a solid framework for progressive change in the territory, and recommends using the policy to promote a peaceful settlement. Copies are available from the East Timor Project, c/o CIIR, Unit 3, Canonbury Yard, 190a New North Road, London N1 7BJ, UK. Fax: +44 171 359 0017. E-mail: ciir@gn.apc.org

Beyond Balibo

When President Suharto arrives in London in April, the British government has an opportunity to raise questions about the murder of British newsmen Brian Peters and Malcolm Rennie by Indonesian forces at Balibo, East Timor, on 16 October 1975. HUGH DOWSON reports on the latest developments in the Balibo case.

Mrs Wilhelmina Rennie (Malcolm Rennie's mother) and I flew to Australia in October 1997 for a seminar organised by the Australian Section of the International Commission of Jurists (ASICJ). The meeting, 'Balibo and Beyond', examined the death of freelance pressman, Roger East, along with scores of East Timor civilians, at Dili wharf on 8 December 1975, one day after Indonesian troops invaded East Timor. The ICJ is one of the world's leading legal human rights bodies, and for the past 22 years its Australian section has been trying to uncover the truth surrounding the death of East and five others at Balibo.

'Twenty years after those events', said David Bitel, ICJ secretary-general, 'the Australian government commissioned a report from Mr Tom Sherman, former head of the National Crime Authority. The Sherman report, released in mid-1996, left unanswered many of the most significant questions about the deaths of the six journalists.'

Eyewitness evidence

In November 1995 the Australian government opted for a 'preliminary evaluation' (conducted by Sherman) which excluded eyewitness evidence indicating that the main aim of the attack on Balibo was to kill the journalists. In 1997 Dr Andrew McNaughton collected evidence which suggests that the attack on Balibo in October 1975 aimed to kill not only the five Australia-based newsmen, but also a Portuguese TV news team which, fortunately, had left Balibo the day before.

However, Indonesia's ambassador to Australia told Mrs Rennie after the ASICJ seminar that his government believed the Sherman report, saying it showed that all six newsmen died before Indonesia invaded East Timor. By failing to refute this, the Australian government and opposition (which commissioned the report) appear to reinforce Suharto's contempt for human rights, press freedom and democracy.

Silence

Back in October 1975, Australian government signals intelligence (SIGINT) staff were listening to radio messages to and from Indonesia's covert military forces in East Timor, a fact that Suharto knew about. Yet, after the killings, the Australian government only asked for 'news' of the newsmen 'missing' at Balibo, and Suharto saw this failure to denounce the murders as a 'green light' for genocide.

Cover-up

In 1975 Australia's Labour prime minister, Gough Whitlam, decided not to use SIGINT's information on Balibo for fear of upsetting the Indonesian and US governments. This cover-up was continued by the caretaker government installed on 11 November 1975 after Governor-General Kerr sacked Whitlam, and by subsequent governments. Now the Australian government claims that it has never known the truth and, an Australian media blitz notwithstanding, the truth is still hidden from the public and the newsmen's families. As long as this continues, Indonesia's dictator will continue to believe he has the West's full approval for his actions in East Timor.

Whether the truth about Balibo was also hidden from the British government remains unclear – details of what information was passed to it at the time are classified. If it was, Australia broke the UK-USA treaty on SIGINT collaboration and successive British foreign secretaries have misled parliament – on 23 February 1976, 11 May 1976 and again in 1977, 1980 and 1995.

On 9 December 1975 Robin Cook was one of 100 MPs who urged the government to condemn Indonesia's invasion of East Timor. Now, as foreign secretary, Cook has announced an ethical foreign policy. More openness about what happened in Balibo could be a marker of the sincerity of that statement. It would also be welcomed by the families of those who died. ■



The Australian ambassador in Jakarta was presented with four boxes of remains, plus TV equipment and papers, on 12 November 1975 by General Sugama of BAKIN (the Indonesian army's central intelligence agency). The next of kin of all five newsmen were then persuaded, in some cases by rather devious means, to allow the remains to be buried in Jakarta. This picture shows a single coffin that was buried in Jakarta on 5 (or 6) December 1975 in a service arranged by the Australian embassy. The newsmen's families were not invited and some families did not know about the burial service until much later. Photographs of the service were withheld from two families until 1995 and from the remaining families until 1997. The Australian government says that this was out of 'compassion'.

ASEM — putting people at the heart of economics

The UK government will come under intense pressure to raise issues of human rights, democracy and workers' rights with Indonesia's embattled President Suharto when he comes to London this year for the second meeting of heads of government from Asia and Europe (ASEM II).

Indonesian ministers and officials will be among others from 25 countries gathering in London in April. Economics will be top of the agenda. The first Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM I), in Bangkok in 1996, drew ministers from all 15 members of the European Union, anxious to cash in on what was then seen as the Asian economic 'miracle'. Official documents stated that 'of foremost importance is securing an open environment for competition and allowing market economy principles to work'. Now, with confidence in the Asian economies shattered by the currency crisis in the region, people's organisations and NGOs will be

urging government officials to take stock, broaden the ASEM dialogue and consider the social impact of free market policies.

Concerns

People's organisations are working to try to ensure that ASEM

- is consultative, participatory, transparent and accountable
- addresses the impact of policies on ordinary people, human rights and the environment; and
- broadens its agenda to include governance and human rights issues, environmental sustainability and people-centred development.

Being heard will not be easy. An informal process, ostensibly with a broad scope for dialogue, ASEM should in theory provide ample opportunity for civil organisations to play a constructive role. But real decision-making remains open to an elite few: there are no formal mechanisms for people's organisations to

contribute, and their input is virtually unacknowledged in ASEM documents.

In response, a coalition of NGOs and people's organisations in Asia and Europe has been formed to bring the people's vision into the process. Working parties have been set up among NGOs and people's organisations in Europe and Asia to coordinate lobbying of national governments and business. They will also organise media strategies, disseminate information, and stage events to throw the spotlight on human rights and democracy issues.

Alongside the heads of government meeting in April, an NGO conference will take place in London from 31 March to 1 April. This will focus on trade and investment and bring together the results of research and analysis from groups throughout the ASEM countries, producing concrete recommendations for government and businesses and strategies for work towards ASEM III in South Korea in 2000. A people's 'vision statement' is being formulated to present to the governments at ASEM II. ■

Official ASEM timetable

1998		
17-18 February	London	Senior Officials, Trade & Investment, Meeting
20 February	London	Senior Officials, Foreign Affairs, Meeting
20-21 February	Singapore	ASEF Asia-Europe Forum on Globalisation
2 April	London	Ministers' Meeting (preparatory summit)
2-3 April	London	ASEM Business Event
3-4 April	London	Second ASEM Summit
1st Semester 98	UK	Symposium on social challenges into the 21st century
Spring 1998	Austria	Young Leaders' Symposium
May 1998	Naples	ASEM Forum for Small/Medium Enterprises

ASEM III is set to take place in Seoul, Korea, in the year 2000.

Members of ASEM

The Asian states involved in ASEM are Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam (all members of the Association of South East Asian Nations — ASEAN) plus China, Japan and South Korea. The European members are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Contact details

ASEM and East Timor/Indonesia

For further information on actions over East Timor, contact the British Coalition for East Timor. Phone: 0181 985 1127. E-mail: maggie@gn.apc.org

For further information about human rights and democracy events, contact Focus on the Global South in Bangkok, TNI in Amsterdam, the Burma Action Group in London or the ASEM NGO internet website: www.worldcom.nl/tni

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A leaflet setting out the concerns of NGOs and people's organisations is available on request from Kathleen Armstrong at CIIR (address as above).

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