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Gusmão 'released' as violence escalates

The Indonesian government stunned the international solidarity movement by announcing in January that it might be willing to 'release East Timor from Indonesia after the June 1999 parliamentary elections'. And in February, Xanana Gusmão was moved from prison to house arrest.

Information minister Yunus Yosfiah gave the following statement on 27 January:

A regional autonomy 'plus' will be accorded to East Timor. [...] If this is not accepted by the mass in East Timor, we will suggest to the new membership of the people's Consultative Assembly — formed as the result of the next elections — to release East Timor from Indonesia [...] This is very democratic because the people decide, not the president. (BBC)

East Timorese leaders initially greeted the statement — the first time the government has publicly talked about independence — with caution. From prison Xanana Gusmão interpreted the remarks as Indonesia 'implicitly [accepting] our right to self-determination'. He said: 'We are satisfied with the decision of the Indonesian government. It is better late than never.'

International reaction to the Indonesian announcement was warm. The US state department called the move 'a positive development' (AFP, 27 January 1999). UN secretary-general Kofi Annan welcomed the move, but added that talks on the UN autonomy proposal would continue (see page 2).

The announcement had little immediate impact at the official negotiations between Portugal and Indonesia, starting on 28 January, in New York. The Indonesian negotiators in New York made it clear that the government regards

independence as a 'second-best, worst-case scenario'. Indeed, Yosfiah's statement was prefaced by the expressed hope that the East Timorese would accept 'Autonomy Plus', whereby the territory would have wide-ranging autonomy within the Indonesian archipelago.

Jakarta appears to be ruling out a long period of transition as envisaged by the resistance. The choice on offer seems to be the immediate acceptance of autonomy or independence after June.

Gusmão under house arrest

Xanana Gusmão's move from Cipinang prison to house arrest confirms Indonesia's acceptance of his role in the negotiations over the autonomy package. This highlights the perception, held by diverse parties, that Xanana is the only Timorese leader who can guarantee national unity and reconciliation. (See page 3)

New pragmatism?

Whilst there are well-founded suspicions of Jakarta's motives, the announcement may indicate that the government has decided to take a more pragmatic approach to the 'Timor problem'. For former president Suharto, retention of East Timor was a question of principle. For the new government, faced with severe problems on all fronts, this may no longer be the case. Indonesian finance minister, Ginandjar Kartasasmita, has commented on the high political and financial cost of Jakarta's former East Timor policy. (AFP, 30 January 1999)

The apparent shift in Indonesia's policy may be partly the result of an about-turn in Australian foreign policy on East Timor. Australia was the only country to accord 'de jure' recognition to Indonesia's annexation of East Timor. The Australian government recently announced that although it would prefer to see an autonomous East Timor within Indonesia, it will respect the outcome of any referendum on self-determination.

Indonesia's decision has been reported in some quarters to have been a relief to veteran foreign minister Ali Alatas, who will retire after the elections. The armed forces have always been regarded as the sticking point, as far as relin-

quishing East Timor is concerned. Yet armed forces chief General Wiranto has asserted: 'If the situation progresses in a way that allows East Timor to separate with dignity from the Republic of Indonesia, the armed forces will accept this decision'. (*El País*, 29 January 1999)

Violence continues

Whether this will be borne out remains to be seen. Indications so far are not encouraging. The situation inside East Timor has deteriorated as the Indonesian military has taken to arming pro-integration militias. This might be part of a local strategy on the part of the military to present the East Timorese as ungovernable and therefore in need of military policing. The result has been an escalation of violent clashes to the point where internal displacement of people has become a new problem. An incident in a village near Suai in the last week of January, for example, resulted in three deaths and the displacement of more than 200 villagers.

Too much, too soon?

Many commentators are alarmed at the prospect of independence as soon as June, as East Timor is far from ready for this eventuality. The resistance itself has backed a transitional phase. Any Indonesian withdrawal would have to be carefully managed at every level. There is the question of what would happen to the large number of migrants and transmigrants from Indonesia. Civil servants are feeling particularly vulnerable: they are unpopular with pro-independence East Timorese, and many would probably leave East Timor.

Although Jakarta's apparent new flexibility is welcome, East Timor's needs are now manifold. In the context of the forthcoming Commission on

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Summary

News of Indonesia's apparent readiness to let go of East Timor broke as this issue of *Timor Link* was going to press. Our front page is devoted to this story. The rest of the newsletter, compiled prior to the announcement, profiles Xanana Gusmão, examines pressing concerns for East Timorese women, and reports on new developments in the Balibo case.

Human Rights and the imminent visit of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions, the United States, Australia and the European Union must press the Indonesian authorities to deal with the local military units in East Timor which are fomenting violence. A UN human rights

monitoring presence is needed immediately. International support for what might turn out to be an indecently brief transition period must now be considered. High on the list of priorities must be material and technical support aimed at preventing conflict that could result from such a

dramatic policy shift. The UN negotiations should now, as a matter of urgency, begin to address a wide spectrum of East Timorese interlocutors, particularly marginalised groups such as women. The next issue of *Timor Link* will examine the priorities in detail.

Autonomy not automatic

Discussions on broad-based autonomy for East Timor have been stalled by continuing military crackdowns and more deaths in the territory, creating suspicion about the idea among the East Timorese. The United Nations has been appealing for restraint and trying to bring the talks back on track.

An initial plan for autonomy for East Timor, drafted at the UN's request by Hurst Hannum, a western professor of international law, is being discussed at the Tripartite Talks between Portugal, Indonesia and the United Nations. But when Hannum presented the elements that might be included in an autonomy agreement to a group of Timorese, including members of the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT), in the Algarve in October 1998, most of those present unequivocally opposed the idea if there was no assurance that self-determination could be incorporated into a final agreement.

This reaction reflects more widespread feelings. Recent visitors to East Timor encountered strong opposition to autonomy. In some quarters even the notion of a referendum on the territory's status is seen as an insult to the people's suffering, and resistance to the occupation, over the past 23 years. When people bear the physical evidence — gashes from cuts, scars from cigarette burns — of abuse at the hands of the Indonesian military, it is difficult to argue that autonomy, even as a transitional phase, will be the last sacrifice asked of the East Timorese in order to save face for Indonesia and encourage a military withdrawal.

Control

Although José Ramos-Horta personally defended autonomy as a viable transitional arrangement when he presented the peace plan of the National Council of Maubere Resistance (CNRM) at the European Parliament in 1993, he has also stated that Xanana Gusmão is the only person capable of convincing the people that autonomy is a viable step towards a referendum.

In an interview with the Portuguese news agency, Lusa, on 16 December 1998, Gusmão said: 'If I accepted autonomy, it was because I considered the need, for a time, for political adaptation.' He said that the East Timorese should negotiate a 10-year autonomy period as a transitional phase, leading to self-determination. A transition is necessary 'not only to permit the Timorese to educate themselves politically', he said, but to create 'the necessary infrastructures, in the area of human resources and other areas'.

Mistrust

However, the East Timorese remain at the periphery of the Tripartite Talks. The UN secretary-general Kofi Annan and his representatives have consulted only political and church leaders. Little information has reached the Timorese population, and many who have argued in the past that decision-making should be centred on the people, and remain inside East Timor, today are trying to encourage the East Timorese people to be patient.

In August 1998 Agio Pereira of the East Timor Relief Association told the Matebian News (run by East Timorese in Australia) that the CNRT

would risk alienating the student movement by supporting a transitional autonomy. But there does not seem to be a consensus, even within CNRT, on this difficult issue. The Timorese Democratic Union (UDT) opposed autonomy, and the five political parties stated on 11 August 1998 (see *Timor Link* 45) that they were against autonomy under Indonesia.

Part of the difficulty is that Jakarta continues to demand that under the terms of the autonomy offer defence, foreign relations and fiscal concerns remain under its control, although there may be an opportunity to discuss some aspects of these areas. Meanwhile, relations between East Timor and Jakarta, including arbitration, and the internal structure of any new government, are still to be considered. Other elements of the agreement being discussed include the economy, the electoral and judicial systems and policing, but not the key question of sovereignty.

The East Timorese will remain suspicious of autonomy under Indonesian control unless there is transparency and an attempt to discuss, systematically, how the arrangement would work for East Timor, to examine each of the elements that need to be incorporated into an agreement, and to create wider awareness of the positive aspects of the proposal.

• CORRECTION: 'Autonomy and the law on self-determination' (*Timor Link* 45) was written by Pedro Pinto Leite, secretary-general of the International Platform of Jurists for East Timor (IPJET). His article was from the introduction of a new book *The East Timor Problem and the role of Europe* (IPJET, 1998).

Tomorrow's leaders

The East Timorese Students Solidarity Council for Democracy has been attracting increasing attention. Milena Pires examines this movement which emerged during the post-Suharto period.

The East Timorese Students Solidarity Council for Democracy (ETSSCD) has filled a political void in East Timor. Largely distrustful of some of the current political organisations, the population has opened its arms and embraced this new political force. The leaders of the ETSSCD have no political aspirations, nor do they appear to wish to challenge the current political order. But after 23 years of resistance the people are looking for alternatives.

The idealism of the youthful members and their devotion to the cause has made the ETSSCD a force with a large following. For the older generation, supporting the student council

has become as simple as supporting their own sons and daughters.

The ETSSCD is an independent body. It was formed on 8 June 1998, although, as yet, the University of East Timor has not accepted the student council as a formal part of the university. Its main goals are to encourage reconciliation, promote participatory democracy and prepare civil society for self-government. The scope of its activities is impressive, but it has few funds. Apart from its well publicised Free Speech Forums, or Mini Dialogues, the ETSSCD also runs weekend classes to establish discussion groups, and it promotes gender equality and women's rights through the Grupo Feton Foen Sae Timor Loro Sae.

Active

Although some Timorese fear it will reorganise and become a political party, the ETSSCD has

taken a decision not to compete with other youth organisations — it sees its role as simply complementing the work of other organisations and groups. It believes that the people need to take an active role in decision making.

The ETSSCD works at the grassroots to ensure that people are fully informed on a wide range of subjects, from the meaning of a referendum to the implications of autonomy. It also promotes awareness about governance and argues that any future government, including a transitional one, must be representative and democratic. It wants to monitor the process so that candidates are elected on the basis of free elections and on their abilities.

For now Xanana Gusmão is the undisputed leader; but the ETSSCD may well produce the leader that East Timor will need in the post-Xanana years.

The Mandela of Timor

Roque Rodrigues examines the life of Xanana Gusmão and his role in the struggle to bring peace to East Timor.

When East Timor was invaded by Indonesian troops 23 years ago, Xanana Gusmão was virtually unknown. The East Timorese people took to the mountains and resisted the invasion with great determination, only to face napalm, defoliants, systematic executions and induced starvation. But they were driven out of the mountains and forced into resettlement centres, which were little more than concentration camps.

Most members of the central committee of Fretilin (the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) were killed, only Mau Hunu and Xanana Gusmão surviving. After the death of its president, Nicolau Lobato, on 31 December 1978, Xanana assumed the leadership of Fretilin. It changed his life.

He consulted the population to see whether they were willing to continue resistance. Once assured of the people's support, Xanana began to reorganise the movement. This long process culminated in 1981 when at the national conference he was elected leader of Fretilin and chosen as commander-in-chief of Falantil (the National Liberation Armed Forces of East Timor), a responsibility which, in practice, he had taken on after Lobato's death.

Building peace

After two years under his responsibility, Falantil initiated talks with the occupying armed forces in the liberated areas of East Timor. A ceasefire was achieved but within five months Indonesia had broken it: on 8 August 1983, 400 people were massacred in Kraras.

Xanana conceived and implemented a policy of national unity which involved building contacts with the Catholic church and developing a clandestine network in urban areas and other occupied zones. In 1988 the success of this initiative enabled Xanana to create the National Council of Maubere Resistance (CNRM).

Capture

Xanana was captured by the Indonesian armed forces on 20 November 1992, a year after the Santa Cruz massacre, and imprisoned in Jakarta. He was sentenced to life imprisonment following a trial denounced as farcical by all international observers. The sentence was later commuted to 20 years.

During the trial Xanana revealed himself to be an exceptional man, for while appearing to give in to Indonesian pressure, he managed to denounce the genocidal character of the Indonesian occupation in front of the international press.

Symbol

To the people of East Timor, Xanana has become a symbol of their struggle for freedom, the key person in the political negotiations for



Demonstrators call for Xanana Gusmão's release. His freedom could unlock the negotiations over East Timor's future.

peace over two decades of conflict. In April 1998, the end of the first East Timorese National Convention in the Diaspora, he was unanimously acclaimed president of the CNRM. Xanana continues to direct its strategy.

Known to the international media as the 'Mandela of Timor', Xanana is an inspiration to the growing pro-democracy movement in Indonesia itself. When accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, José Ramos Horta said:

This speech belongs to someone else who should be here today. He is an outstanding man of courage, tolerance and statesmanship. Yet, this man is in prison for no other crime than his ideas and vision of peace and freedom. [...] Through Xanana, I bow to my people in profound respect, loyalty and humility because they are the real heroes and peace-makers.

President Nelson Mandela of South Africa met with Xanana during a state visit to Indonesia in July 1997 and discussed the East Timor issue for two hours with him. In April 1998 Mandela sent his foreign minister, Alfred Nzo, to follow up these discussions. Nzo met with Xanana alone for half an hour, monitored by the Indonesian military.

Since Suharto's resignation on 21 May 1998, many heads of state and government officials have joined the campaign for Xanana's release. Such a move would unlock the negotiating process, allowing the East Timorese representatives to participate fully in the UN-sponsored talks, which they are now willing to do provided they are led by Xanana Gusmão.

Clear vision

Xanana has hardly wasted his time in prison. As well as studying law and English, he has also learnt to speak Bahasa Indonesia. Being in the

same jail as Indonesian pro-democracy leaders, such as Muchtar Pakpahan, has enabled him to establish strong ties with the Indonesian pro-democracy movement.

The military occupation of East Timor has fractured the society but Xanana has earned such respect that he could promote reconciliation within Timorese society and a smooth transition to a free East Timor. The past 23 years have shown that there is no military solution. But the current situation offers an opportunity to solve the East Timor conflict that cannot be missed. Xanana Gusmão could help the Indonesians leave the territory without losing face, and guarantee stability in the region. He has the capacity to understand all the sensibilities involved, both internally and on the international scene.

Roque Rodrigues is a member of the National Executive Committee of the CNRT.

Who is Xanana?

José Alexandre Gusmão, alias Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, was born on 20 June 1946 in Laleia, Manatuto, East Timor. He, one brother and five sisters were raised in the country. His father was a school teacher and Xanana completed primary and started secondary school at the Catholic mission of Nossa Senhora de Fatima in Dare, before going to Dili. He started work at a young age, in the mornings as a chartered surveyor and in the afternoons teaching at the Chinese school. In April 1974 he joined the staff of *A Voz de Timor* (The Voice of Timor — a newspaper published in East Timor prior to August 1975). He became a member of Fretilin — the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor — that same year, later becoming deputy head of its Department of Information.

Winds of change

Zacarias da Costa has been a participant at all four of the All-inclusive Intra East Timorese Dialogue (AIETD). Here he analyses the positions of the major players at the negotiations at this crucial period in East Timor's struggle for self-determination.

Apart from some new participants from East Timor, the format of the fourth All-inclusive Intra East Timorese Dialogue, held at Krumbach castle in Austria from 31 October to 1 November 1998, remained unchanged from the previous three.

Also unchanged was the position of the pro-integration participants, this time led by Jose Tavares, a junior Timorese diplomat from Jakarta, who substituted for Ambassador Francisco Lopes da Cruz. Lopes da Cruz had twice visited Xanana Gusmão, president of the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT), in prison, and has since appeared to qualify his seemingly unquestioning execution of Jakarta's orders. This may explain the substitution of Tavares, well trained in receiving and executing orders from the capital. Jakarta would appear to have adopted an alternative strategy.

The resistance movement was represented at the latest talks by the newly created CNRT, reinforced by Armandina Gusmão, sister of Xanana, Mau Huno, former Falintil commander, and Antero da Silva, leader of the East Timorese Students Solidarity Council for Democracy. The CNRT had met a few weeks earlier in Algarve, Portugal, to devise a coordinated strategy. However, a disagreement between longer-standing members of the CNRT's political council on strategy and timing of various initiatives within the meeting fueled the Indonesian government and media propaganda machines.

It also gave the Indonesian military in East Timor the opportunity to propagate the myth that the resistance could not agree on anything and that East Timorese aspirations for self-government were unviable. José Ramos-Horta,

deputy president of the CNRT and 1996 Nobel peace prize winner, was targeted by some sectors of the Indonesian government-run media following off-the-cuff remarks made by disgruntled CNRT colleagues.

Development

The 'Third Way' group, led by Abilio Araujo, former President of Fretilin, took a more opportunistic and conciliatory stance in an attempt to reflect the winds of change in Jakarta whipped up since Suharto's demise. While he stopped short of using the term 'self-determination', Araujo stated that there was a need to determine the collective will of the people. He argued that development was the answer to all evils in East Timor, including human rights violations.

The current governor of East Timor, Abilio Soares, was absent from the meetings in Austria, having reported sick, although he did attend the opening and closing sessions. A once significant presence at the table, Soares now appears more marginalised given recent developments. Former governor Mario Carrascalao was another notable absentee. He declined his invitation to attend because, under the current format, participants cannot discuss the political status of East Timor.

Indeed, the dialogue's now outdated and unworkable model was the major concern of the CNRT, and most of the participants other than those loyal to Jakarta. The terms of reference, agreed four years ago by the foreign ministers of Portugal and Indonesia, together with the United Nations, forbid discussion of the territory's political status, and a formal proposal to create another forum to debate these ideas was blocked by Jakarta, despite a consensus in favour among the other participants. Tavares stated that a formal proposal was a waste of time because Jakarta would issue official instructions to block it — an indication of the Indonesian government's continuing policy of casual disengagement from a process which it now appears to view as even more of a sideshow than ever.

Similarly, desire to create a third forum to discuss technical issues, drawing from the experience of a multi-disciplinary team, was also blocked by the pro-Jakarta and Third Way groups.

Democracy

In contrast to the first three AIETD sessions, there was no final statement agreed at this round of talks. Jakarta took this as an opportunity to try to discredit the Timorese. However, Jamsheed Marker, UN special envoy for East Timor, said that the failure to agree was in no way detrimental to the Timorese, but demonstrated to its fullest capacity the practice of democracy. Portugal's foreign minister, Jaime Gama, also said he was satisfied with the discussions, stating that now was the time for unanimity because participants had moved beyond a simplistic consensual model.

However, most of the 42 participants did sign an eight-page document combining the initial thoughts of the CNRT with points made in a letter written by Bishop Carlos Belo, and presented by Father Antonio Belo, vicar general of Dili. This paper stressed the need to discuss political questions; it covered detailed proposals for development and women's rights; and stated that 'the current format of the AIETD does not correspond to the challenges and needs of the current situation'. It concluded that a genuine intra-Timorese dialogue can only be held inside East Timor, must be truly representative of all of East Timor's population (at present there are only four women participants compared to 38 male participants), and must be free from the constraints imposed by Jakarta.

The first two dialogues in the AIETD (which took place in 1995 and 1996) brought together Timorese participants of different political opinions, some of whom had not spoken to each other in over 20 years. These initial talks also helped people to cross the boundaries created when they were separated by the civil conflict of August 1975; they brought together two generations of Timorese people who shared the aim of finding a solution to the conflict. However, the current situations in East Timor, in Indonesia, and internationally, have made the format of the talks cumbersome, since they have not been permitted to evolve into a more useful vehicle for East Timorese input.

Zacarias da Costa represents East Timor at the European Union and the United Nations, and was vice-president of the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT) until his resignation in October 1998.

The All-inclusive Intra-East-Timorese Dialogue: The story so far

Date	Outcome
3-6 June 1995	Final declaration recalled resolution 37/30 of the UN General Assembly. The declaration was later rejected when pro-integration Timorese, with an ear to their Indonesian sponsors, realised that this resolution recognised Portugal as the administering power.
19-22 March 1996	Heavy pressure from Indonesian sponsored participants, especially Francisco Lopez da Cruz, led to the watering-down of the final communiqué.
20-23 October 1997	Five new participants admitted, including two women, who attempt to introduce a focus on women's issues. Catholic Bishops of East Timor table letter appealing for demilitarisation and a definitive ceasefire. With political questions still precluded, agreement reached over founding a cultural centre.

Uncovering the key to East Timor's future

The truth about the murders of British and Australian newsmen in Balibo in 1975 is still being covered up. Hugh Dowson examines a 23 year-old scandal.

'Balibo', says Bruce Haigh, 'is the chink through which the whole East Timor issue can be prised open.'

In the 1970s as an Australian diplomat Haigh helped Donald Woods escape from South Africa with the text of 'Biko'. In the mid 1980s, as an official at the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (DFAT), he 'managed' part of the Balibo cover-up.

But Haigh will not give evidence to his government's recently re-opened 'preliminary evaluation' of the Balibo murders. Like the families of the newsmen who died there (for whose benefit the 'evaluation' supposedly exists), like many Timorese, and like other ex-diplomats, he has no confidence in the evaluation process. Instead, Haigh wants to help end the cover-up that consigns East Timor to Indonesia's genocidal embrace.

But until British media — and parliamentary — interest in Balibo boils over, key Indonesian generals will assume that the occupation can continue forever.

Background

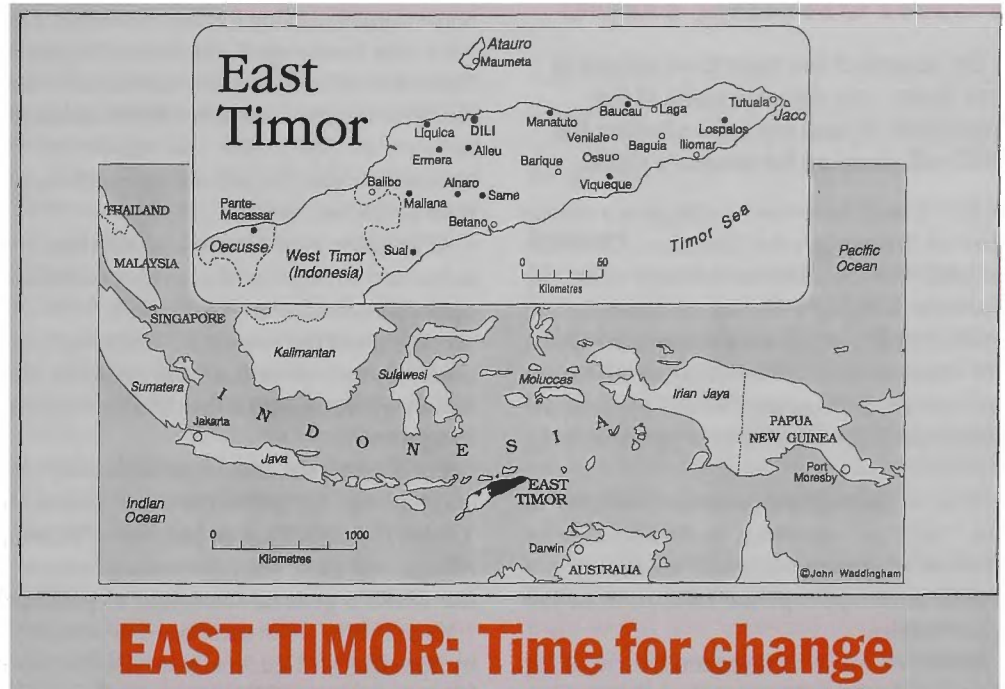
From late 1974 Australian diplomats were receiving regular briefings from intermediaries about Indonesian generals Murtopo and Murdani's plans to gain East Timor. By early 1975 Indonesian special troops, called Kopassandha (now Kopassus), were inside East Timor destabilising the territory as it was decolonised. On 11 August 1975 the Indonesian-sponsored civil war broke out and the Australian government tried to exclude western journalists so that Indonesia's Antara news agency could manipulate news.

Indonesian briefings to Allan Taylor, then the political counsellor in Australia's embassy in Jakarta, later ambassador and now head of Australia's Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS), became daily events.

However, in late August 1975, Australia's Channel 9 news team broke Antara's stranglehold. Reaching Dili by boat, the three-man group included news director Gerald Stone and TV cameraman Brian Peters, (a British citizen) and the Australian Kerry Packer. They revealed that Fretilin's forces were winning the civil war. Their presence may have prevented a full scale invasion taking place that September.

Stone and Packer left East Timor from Atauro Island in early September on a Royal Australian Air Force plane. But Peters remained for a week,

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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.

Confronting rape

In the second of her reports on women in East Timor, Ines Almeida looks at the prevalence of rape and asks whether the CNRT will stand up for women's rights.

In East Timor the women's struggle is a central part of the struggle for liberation. On International Women's Day on 8 March 1998, the Timorese Women's Communication Forum (FOKUSPER) organised a conference and a play about women's roles. It created humour and debate and was part of the educational process which this active women's group is trying to promote.

Health conditions for many women in East Timor are appalling, and constraints on freedom of movement mean women do not benefit from appropriate education or job opportunities.

Recent research undertaken by a working group of the East Timor Relief Association (ETRA) showed there is systematic rape and humiliation of Timorese women. In Viqueque, a sub-district in the eastern part of East Timor, the military recently raped 15 women. A Timor-based human rights group is investigating the incidents, but a number of the victims are afraid to speak.

Daily reality

Some women working for the Clandestine Front have also been raped, including 19 year-old Maria dos Santos (not her real name), whose father and brother were killed by the Indonesian military in 1975. She was raped for two consecutive days by Indonesian soldiers, and bore a child as a result.

In Lospalos, local Timorese women have been subjected to rape by the territorial military operations battalion (BTT) since 1978. The average age of the women is 30, although some much younger women are also targeted. Many fathers are threatened if they don't give up their daughters.

Confronting the daily reality of women's lives is a challenge for both women and men in East Timor. The CNRT has an Institute of Women's Affairs, and there are references to women in the CNRT's general statement of principles ('Magna Carta'). But these need to be matched by specific and carefully-devised actions. Whether the CNRT can do this is another question.

Ines Almeida is a Timorese activist. She is deputy director of the East Timor Relief Association (ETRA) and the only Timorese woman to have participated in all four sessions of the All-inclusive Intra-East Timorese Dialogues.

Parallel hope for Timor's women

The United Nations special rapporteur on violence against women visited East Timor for the first time in 1998; and after years of being marginalised and abused, Timorese women are mobilising.

The Dili Spring, the mass demonstrations from September to December 1998, which brought thousands of Timorese people to the streets for the first time, was paralleled by a strategic and increasingly visible Timorese women's movement. The movement has been slowly taking shape over years, but 1998 saw the first steps towards consolidation.

Two important public events were organised by Grupo Feton Foen Sae Timor Loro Sae and Fokusper, the Timorese Women's Communication Forum in November. The first, a conference which discussed women's lives under the Indonesian military occupation, took place on the 23 November in Dili, with 200 participants. The second, a seminar and protest to mark the International Day Against Violence Against Women, followed on 25 November. More than 500 people took part.

Achievements

Both forums are remarkable achievements in a society where women have been accustomed to silence. Considering that neither of the main organising bodies have been in existence for much longer than a year, their ability to attract such large numbers is a reflection of

the members' abilities, courage, determination and commitment to raising awareness of women's rights. A constant focus of the forums has been mental violence, although women were encouraged to wake up and fight against all forms of violence, be it from the Indonesian military, the government or their own menfolk.

Violence

In early December Dr Radhika Coomaraswamy, the UN special rapporteur on violence against women, went on a three-day visit to the territory.

She had earlier reported on violence against women in East Timor to the 54th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. This report had focused on state-sanctioned violence. Dr Coomaraswamy had stated that she received a large number of complaints about sexual violence by Indonesian security forces in East Timor. These included 'sexual violence, rape, forced marriage, forced prostitution and the intimidation of female relatives of suspected activists'. 'Indonesian state authorities have not responded in accordance with their international obligations', said the rapporteur. None of the cases resulted in prosecution.

Dr Coomaraswamy is due to present the findings of her December visit to the 55th session of the UNCHR, to be held in March and April 1999. Her findings in East Timor should help Timorese women activists and the women's movement in their work.

Poem by

Filomena Barros dos Reis

East Timor, 10 November 1998

Woman

*Woman you are like a flower
That releases your fragrance
To the corners of the world*

*Woman you are like water
That flows to moisten the land
In order that all living things grow*

*Woman your love
Is as great as a river
That flows our way
To cool the feelings of those who are filled
with anger
And moisten their thirsty mouth*

*Woman your work is enormous
Although you have given yourself to fill
this world
This world will not recognise you
You are always wrong
According to this world's mouth*

*Hhh è Timor Woman
The time has already arrived
For you to open your mouth
To shout to the world
That you have suffered more than enough
Demand your rights
The rights that they have taken
Devastating your life*

*Hhh è Timor Woman
Stand up
Help one another
Shout even louder
Women's rights
Women's rights*

Flying back to new freedoms

After more than 20 years' absence from her native East Timor, CIIR policy officer Milena Pires visited her country in September 1998. Here she reports on some of the changes taking place despite the continuing presence of the Indonesian military.

Although I left East Timor when I was a child the joy of my return after 23 years cannot be described fully in words. A surreal experience at times, I tried to absorb all that I could, making up for lost time in a country where life and death are close neighbours.

Yet in the 12 days which took me from the capital Dili to the extreme south-western region of Suai and to Baucau in the east, what I found in all the places I visited and among all the people I met was a determination to live in peace, in freedom, and with justice.

Imprints of occupation

Approaching the island from the north west I saw again the coastal towns of Maubara, Liquica and the surrounding area close to Dili, bordered by the stark mountains and the colour of exposed red earth — the most visible mark of the Indonesian military occupation. Much of the vegetation has been cleared and the trees cut to deprive the armed resistance, Falantil, of camouflage. Poverty has also forced the Timorese to cut and sell wood for fuel. Sandalwood and other highly valued woods, such as teak, have been plundered by Indonesian conglomerates. The evidence of environmental degradation marks the hills near Dili and is repeated elsewhere in the country.

The second most visible sign of the occupation is the intimidating presence of the military, which is institutionalised in all aspects of daily life. There are numerous imposing military and police compounds encased by barbed wire; public servants wear a military-style uniform; there are military check-points throughout the country; and patrols criss-cross the streets of Dili at dusk.

One evening I saw open trucks carrying at least 20 soldiers, with their guns pointed menacingly forwards in a display of the routine intimidation which East Timorese have learned to expect. Their black ski masks were not for the cold — the children around me whispered 'ninjas' (state-sponsored thugs). Outside Dili soldiers wear civilian clothes, but are distinguished by the arms they carry, as they ride on motor bikes, or as groups of six to eight in open topped trucks.

After Suharto

There have been some marked changes in East Timor since the fall of Suharto. One woman told me that 'reformasi', the new period of reforms, was an opportunity to push the boundaries, to enlarge the space for action. The Timorese cannot afford to miss this opportunity, she said. She was confident that every new and

bold action was protected by a new consensus among the people, who had tested their right to freedom of assembly over the past few months (see *Timor Link* 44, page 2) and would not hesitate to take to the streets in massive protests if any of the leaders of these actions were targeted.

Others I met were more hesitant, suspecting Indonesia's new flexibility is a trap to identify key individuals and begin a more severe crackdown. Many of the new freedoms in East Timor feel fragile. There is a hangman's noose around the territory, whose cord the military can tighten and loosen at will. Recent military action in Alas and Maliana has shown this to be true.

Dreams

However, self-determination and independence no longer feel like nebulous dreams. In Baucau, under the supportive guidance of the local Catholic diocese, a small cooperative has been set up to provide income-generating and employment opportunities for young people and women. The aim is to prepare the people to be self-sufficient so that they can contribute to East Timor's future economy.

I had the privilege of meeting a young man who had worked his way through tertiary studies and was now running a small carpentry workshop from the verandah of a house he rented from the church. The workshop employed six people who hand-made beautiful pieces of furniture in rosewood. They possessed one electric tool between them, and they took turns using it to cut, shape, join and finish each of the pieces. Their dream is to teach their skills to other unemployed young people so that the workshop can be expanded.

I also met a remarkable woman who runs a sewing workshop from a small house whose foundations she dug and laid herself. Her life has been touched many times by loss and sadness — her husband was imprisoned and beaten to death by Indonesian soldiers shortly after the invasion — and yet she derives great strength and purpose from these experiences. She has taken in several orphans and raised and educated them alongside her own children. Her dream is to share her skills in sewing and cooking with other women so that they too can set up their own small business, or join the workshop and teach their skills to others.

Key people in both the carpentry and sewing workshops believe they are doing more than just generating income. They want to incorporate best-practice models into the workshops, so workers' rights, occupational health and safety matters and other industrial issues are taught as an integral part of the project.

These initiatives, and others that I visited, are clearly in need of funding, but they are suspicious of finance from overseas. Some Timorese organisations have flatly refused to compromise the real needs of their constituencies by attempting to tailor applications so that

they appeal to funders. Undoubtedly, greater flexibility is needed from potential funders if they are really to address the needs of people on the ground.

Rumours

Because of the oppressive policies ruling their lives, many of the East Timorese I met are highly politicised. Nevertheless many had a very black-and-white view of the current UN-brokered talks between Portugal and Indonesia. They supported a referendum because they equated this with independence, but opposed the idea of autonomy because it was seen as integration with Indonesia.

The lack of clear and concrete information fuels a rich rumour mill, whose cycle detracts from sound and informed decision making, especially in a society which lives in fear and is accustomed to receiving information by word of mouth. Continuous communication between the rest of the world and East Timor is crucial so as to provide information on participatory democracy, women's rights, workers' rights and other civil, political, cultural and socio-economic rights, not to mention occupational health and safety issues, hygiene, nutrition and so on.

It is of the utmost importance that visitors continue to go to East Timor as a simple reminder of civility, and in order to reverse the cycle of the hunter and prey, to make the observer — the Indonesian military — the observed.

Calendar of events

January to July 1999

FEBRUARY Tripartite Talks, New York

22 MARCH-30 APRIL United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Geneva

8 MARCH International Women's Day

1-19 MARCH 43rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

5-9 APRIL Conference on a Strategic Development Plan for East Timor, Melbourne, Australia

MAY Indonesian General Elections

20 JUNE Birthday of Xanana Gusmão

JUNE-JULY United Nations Decolonisation Committee meeting, New York

JULY International Conference of East Timorese Studies, University of Western Sydney, Macarthur, NSW, Australia, organised by Dr Geoffrey Hull

3rd International Tetun Conference, Melbourne, Australia, organised by the Japanese Support Committee for Darwin East Timorese School

Updates can be obtained from the East Timor Relief Association (ETRA)

website: <http://www.pactok.net.au/docs/et>

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filming 140 women and children refugees from the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT) and recording Fretilin president Xavier do Amaral's plea to Australia to help stop the invasion.

By 8 September 1975 (according to a leak from the US Defence Intelligence Agency) the civil war had collapsed, with Fretilin announcing victory although resistance from the UDT continued. By the end of the month more journalists had entered the country. On 10 October Australia's Channel 7 team (cameraman Gary Cunningham, reporter Greg Shackleton and soundman Tony Stewart) arrived to investigate Antara's claim that East Timorese anti-Fretilin forces had seized the border post of Batugadé and would soon wrest East Timor from Fretilin. In reality, Kopassandha's Batugadé operation was the first stage of the full-scale invasion scheduled for mid October.

On 13 October Australian ambassador Woolcott cabled Canberra from Jakarta with the news that some 3,200 Indonesian troops would sweep across East Timor from the border on 16 October, some 800 of them via Balibo. The Channel 7 team arrived at Balibo for the second time, and newsmen from Channel 9 (Channel 7's rival) arrived that evening — reporter Malcolm Rennie and cameraman Brian Peters, both British citizens with British passports.

Outrage

Although by 15 October DFAT must have known that the two news teams were at the border, it did not ask Woolcott to urge General Murdani to delay the illegal invasion until they left. Kopassandha also knew that the newsmen were there and, on 16 October, murdered them. The murdered men were photographed dressed in Portuguese uniforms and draped over machine

guns. The bodies were burnt and crushed.

Fearing protests from the newsmen's governments, and assuming that Murdani had thrown away any hope of gaining East Timor, President Suharto stopped the invasion.

On 12 November, after Australia's 'unreliable' Labour government had been dismissed by the governor-general, four shoe-boxes containing the alleged remains of the five newsmen were handed to Woolcott by General Sugama of Indonesia's Bakin intelligence agency, along with three notebooks, a letter written at Balibo on 15 October, and two British passports. One of the notebooks was in Greg Shackleton's writing and was released to his widow Shirley in December 1975 — the others remain unreleased. The letter was presumably Brian Peters's letter to his family in Bristol, from whom it is still withheld.

In handing over the British passports Suharto was seeking the British government's view of the murders, and of genocide as a 'solution' to the East Timor 'problem'. Yet the Foreign Office says that Australian officials withheld the British passports until late January 1976, by which time mass murder was already rife. The Australian government held an elaborate 'funeral' for the newsmen on 5 December, having tricked the newsmen's families into agreeing to a Jakarta burial, and then not inviting them. It even withheld the photographs from the families until the mid 1990s — out of 'compassion'.

On 7 December 1975 full-scale invasion of East Timor was resumed.

'Investigations'

All 'investigations' into the 'unexplained' deaths of the newsmen — notably Allan Taylor's of April/May 1976, and that of Tom Sherman (former Australian National Crime Authority boss) in 1995/96 and October 1998 — are part of an on-going cover-up.

The 'preliminary evaluation' was revived by Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, after the ABC's 'Foreign Correspondent' documentary on Balibo was shown on 20 October 1998, featuring a witness who described how he monitored the Fretilin military's radio traffic for Kopassandha and alerted Kalbuadi to the newsmen's presence in Balibo. This person, 'L1', had been presented to Sherman in Portugal in 1996 by Jill Jolliffe, an Australian journalist who was in Dili on the day of the murders and had received an 'official tip' that 'something big' was happening at the border. But L1 had told Sherman there was no such foreknowledge and that the newsmen died by accident, in a battle — information which Sherman used in his report.

This film also contained an eyewitness account of Yunus Yosfiah's orders at Balibo to kill the newsmen, given by Olandino Maia Guterres, whose escape from East Timor was assisted by Jolliffe. The day after the documentary Downer announced that Sherman would try to interview both Guterres and 'L1'.

The Australian Section of the International Commission of Jurists has called for a judicial inquiry, and Haigh and other witnesses are ready to testify.

In London on 20 October 1998 a crowded press conference, chaired by Ann Clwyd MP, heard from Peters's sister, from Rennie's cousin, and from Nobel Peace prize winner, José Ramos-Horta, who said that, of all East Timor's agonies, the Balibo cover-up disgusts him most. The Foreign Office must be investigated, he insisted.

Hugh Dowson is western region development officer for the United Nations Association in the UK. He works with, but does not represent, relatives of some of the five newsmen murdered at Balibo.

A development strategy

The National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT) is beginning to prepare a development plan for East Timor.

After 23 years as a liberation movement, the East Timorese resistance is beginning the difficult transformation into a force for self-government. A group of Timorese academics and other friends of East Timor assembled in Algarve, Portugal, between 21 and 25 October 1998, to develop a strategic plan for East Timor's development.

The week-long meeting not only identified key sectors for development — its original aim — but also carried out a preliminary analysis and formed a critique of the current situation. It looked at the resources needed to develop the sectors during a transitional phase to independence for East Timor. The principle sectors identified are agriculture,

infrastructure, education, health, public administration, the environment and the judicial system.

An overriding concern was that resources channeled to East Timor from abroad should be better coordinated than at present. There is a growing interest among international funders in East Timor's potential, and duplicated or badly managed projects could detract from the area's real developmental needs. Participants felt it was important to limit development aid going into East Timor to prevent the country becoming dependent, and to increase the chances that aid will meet people's real needs.

The second phase of the CNRT planning process will take place in Melbourne, Australia, in April 1999, when regional working groups will present extensive papers for more in-depth discussion. In the third phase, to take place in the first half of 1999, information on each sector will be included in a document to be presented to the National Political Council of the CNRT, along with recommendations for a strategic all-inclusive and participatory development policy for East Timor.

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