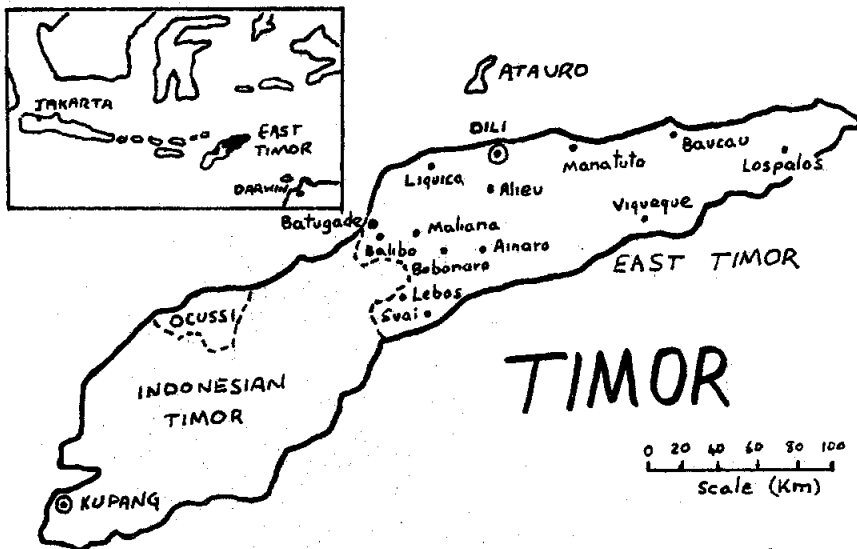


TIMOR INFORMATION SERVICE

Number 1.

11 November, 1975



Total area of Island - 30,000 sq. kms

Portuguese colony - 14,935 sq. kms.

Population of East Timor - 650,000

EAST TIMOR - A PORTUGUESE COLONY

The island of Timor is located at the south eastern extremity of the Nusatenggara Archipeligo (Lesser Sundas.) The Portuguese landed in Timor in 1520 in pursuit of the sandalwood trade. The Dutch later established themselves on the Western half of the island, for similar reasons. The map above shows the areas of the Portuguese Colony usually called East Timor, and the ex-Dutch Colony, now called Indonesian Timor. This was incorporated in the Republic of Indonesia in 1949. Included in the 650,000 people in East Timor are some 10,000 Chinese and 6,000 other non-Timorese who are mainly Portuguese Colonial administrators and soldiers. The original inhabitants were of Melanesian stock speaking a language with branches in New Guinea. During colonial conquest they were forced into the central mountains where their descendants now live. Originally the island was wealthy, as the hereditary chiefs, called liurais, conducted a trade in sandalwood with Chinese and Arab traders. The Portuguese took over this trade and the sandalwood stands were ruthlessly exploited for profit. They no longer exist. Dili, the main town and seaport of East Timor is 600 kms from Darwin. Australia has provided East Timor with its major communication and air link with the outside world.

The 450 years of Portuguese colonial rule has not resulted in 'development' for the Timorese people. 90% of the indigenous population is still illiterate; health services were concentrated around Dili - there were only 20 doctors for the entire population, 12 of them stationed in Dili; malaria and T.B. are widespread, and almost no preventative medicine or immunisations have been established; infant mortality is approx. 50%; 90% of the people live in small hamlets pursuing a subsistence agricultural life, using traditional techniques; the only existing 3 miles of sealed road are in the capital; there is little secondary industry.

Timorese exports are coffee, copra and rubber. Imports are food products, chemicals and machinery. Coffee earned 90% of foreign exchange, but very few Timorese benefited from this. 40% of coffee production was in the hands of a single Portuguese firm, and the bulk of the rest was in the hands of Chinese. Commerce in East Timor has been dominated by Chinese traders. Of the 25 largest firms, 23 were owned by Chinese and 2 by Portuguese. Out of 300 shops, only 1 or 2 were in the hands of Timorese.

The Timorese villagers have existed on their own food crops of rice, corn and cassava. The average per capita income is about A\$30 p.a. Imported foodstuffs such as flour and sugar have been primarily for the urban population. Each male Timorese over the age of 18 had to pay a fixed yearly tax. If he couldn't save the tax from subsistence level labour, then he had to work it off, generally on the roads, resulting in a further loss in living standards. About 10% of the children had the opportunity to go to school, but the language of instruction was Portuguese. Very few Timorese speak Portuguese. The major dialect is Tetum. A few Timorese have been educated at the high school in Dili and the University in Lisbon under a colonial policy to produce a Portuguese orientated elite.

PORTUGUESE COUP

The April, 1974 coup in Portugal took Timor by surprise. The Timorese say that April 26 reached Timor in September. Apart from the recall of the DGS (secret police) the coup in Lisbon had little impact on the administration. There were no immediate sackings; the Governor was not recalled until September, 1974 and many of the Salazar Government officials continued to occupy their leading positions in Dili. However, the administration did announce that as part of the Armed Forces Movement policy of decolonisation the Portuguese presence in East Timor would be phased out as soon as possible.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

By June, 1974 three political groups had formed - The Timorese Democratic Union (UDT), the Association of Timorese Social Democrats (ASDT) which later became the Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor (FRETILIN) and the Timorese Popular Democratic Association (APODETI.)

UDT was made up of Portuguese/Timorese higher-level administration workers, Chinese merchants and backed by the large coffee plantation owners. Initially, they sought self-determination for the Timorese but orientated toward a federation with Portugal, with an intermediary stage before attainment of independence. Until August, 1975, UDT maintained an apparent rigid opposition to any integration with Indonesia. Initially they had some widespread support, but this dwindled by March, 1975 to about 10-15% and that in areas of greatest Portuguese contact.

APODETI, the smallest of the parties wanted Timor to integrate with Indonesia. Apodeti had very few supporters, in fact, there has always been widespread suspicion of Indonesians amongst East Timorese.

FRETILIN arose out of the Committee for Defence of Labour, which sprang up immediately after the Portuguese Coup and quickly won a 50% pay rise for lower administration workers - a rise to 25 escudos (approx. 70 cents A) per day in Dili and 20 in the rest of the island. This first strike in Timor's history was led and organised by Jose Ramos Horta, the present secretary of FRETILIN's political committee. The FRETILIN program is for unity of all Timorese patriots, decolonisation and independence with a transformation of colonial structures to enable progress and development of the East Timorese people. FRETILIN appears to have quickly won large popular support. In March, 1975, it had 200,000 registered members. It has initiated a comprehensive program of social improvement; a literacy program, using Paulo Freire methods and a booklet written in Tetum, which after 6 months had 200 centres operating; organised a national union of students, a workers union and a number of agricultural co-operatives.

In December 1974, when it became clear that Portugal was insistent on decolonisation, UDT formed a coalition with FRETILIN with the common ground of independence against the pro-Indonesian stance of APODETI.

LATEST EVENTS

In April 1975, after visits to Australia and Indonesia, UDT leaders broke their coalition with FRETILIN. In June, the Portuguese government arranged decolonisation talks in Macau, inviting the three parties. FRETILIN boycotted the talks, refusing to sit with representatives of APODETI, whom they regarded represented Indonesian interests rather than those of East Timor.

On August 10, following another visit by UDT leaders to Indonesia, UDT attempted an armed coup in Dili. FRETILIN leaders, warned in advance, were in the hills. From there they asked the Portuguese Governor to arrange talks. This did not occur. Fierce fighting broke out, many people were massacred and villages burnt. By August 20, FRETILIN had organised the support of the army and launched a counter-attack. They achieved a military victory. The Portuguese Governor fled to the island of Atauro, and other Portuguese and Timorese were evacuated to Darwin. Approximately 40,000 Timorese also fled from the fighting into Indonesian Timor, where they remain in refugee camps. Some UDT leaders fled to Indonesia, some to Australia, and some are in prison in Dili. FRETILIN has de facto control of East Timor and is struggling to maintain civil services with very limited resources. The Portuguese flag still flies in Dili, and FRETILIN wishes the Portuguese to return and assist in peaceful decolonisation. Fighting has continued in some border towns between FRETILIN soldiers and troops coming across the border from Indonesian Timor. Some towns have been occupied by these troops. In October, five Australian newsmen were killed in Balibo, while filming this fighting. On November 8 it was announced that talks between Portugal and the three parties would be held shortly, possibly in Australia.

AUSTRALIAN ACTIONS

Australians probably best know of Timor because of the support given to soldiers during World War 2. Thousands of Timorese were killed helping Australian commandos to fight the Japanese.

In August 1974, Prime Minister Whitlam during a visit to Indonesia, said that an independent East Timor could be a potential threat to regional stability and he favoured eventual integration with Indonesia. This was later modified by Foreign Affairs Minister Willesee when he supported the right of the East Timorese to determine their own future.

During early 1975 there were both private and Parliamentary delegations to East Timor. They recommended the restoration of Australian diplomatic presence in Dili (the Consul was withdrawn in 1971.) This did not happen. They also supported Timorese independence and were impressed by FRETILIN's support and program.

In August 1975, following the coup, the Prime Minister made a statement that Australia remained opposed to military involvement, would offer humanitarian aid, called for cessation of fighting and for talk. The Prime Minister also gave recognition to Indonesian 'interest' in the area. In October, Senator Willesee offered to host talks in Australia between Portugal and the three parties.

In November 1974, an Independent East Timor Campaign was formed in Sydney to support East Timor's right of self-determination and independence; to oppose any forced integration in Indonesia, and to support Fretilin community projects. Similar groups were started in Melbourne, Canberra and Perth. They held public rallies, and engaged in active lobbying of Parliamentarians, church and community groups.

Following the coup, Australian Red Cross assisted International Red Cross in sending medical teams to East Timor and to the refugee camps in Indonesian Timor. The Australian Government has given two grants of \$100,000 and \$150,000 to Red Cross for this work.

Australian Society for Intercountry Aid - Timor, an independent aid group, has also had medical teams working in East Timor since the coup.

In October, Australian Council for Overseas Aid had a consultation on East Timor in Melbourne and established a Timor Task Force composed of aid and development agencies. They sent a 4 man team to Timor in late October to investigate the situation and the humanitarian needs. On their return the Timor Relief Appeal was launched on November 7.

In October, The Seaman's Union and the Waterside Workers Federation placed a ban on Indonesian ships. This is continuing because of Indonesian involvement in the fighting and the lack of information on the deaths of the 5 Australian newsmen.

INDONESIA IS FIGHTING IN TIMOR

The Indonesian government has continued to deny that its forces are involved in fighting in East Timor. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that they are involved.

Indonesian training and arming of anti-FRETILIN forces has been operating for some time. Hamish McDonald claims that by September, officials in Jakarta were making little secret of the fact that they were supporting anti-FRETILIN forces ("The Age" Melb. Sept. 15, 1975.) Michael Richardson in Atambua - a major town in Indonesian Timor close to the border - reports that Indonesian commandos are training anti-FRETILIN forces ("The Age" Sept. 23, 1975.) Informed sources are quoted in a report from Jakarta as saying that Brig. Gen. Pranoto, military commander for the Timor region, had authorized the arming and training of UDT/APODETI supporters ("The Age" October 3, 1975.)

The first indication of direct Indonesian troop involvement came with a cable to the United Nations by FRETILIN claiming that "foreign troops" had moved 20 km. into East Timor ("The Age" September 11, 1975.) A few days later FRETILIN claimed that troops wearing Indonesian uniforms and a helicopter were operating on the south coast of East

Timor ("The Age" September 22, 1975.) FRETILIN forces captured an Indonesian soldier 40 km. inside the East Timor border. He was a member of a battalion normally stationed in Java. ("The Age" September 23, 1975.) This soldier has been interviewed by Australian journalists. A week later, A.A.P. quoted informed sources in Jakarta as saying that Indonesian troops launched an attack on a FRETILIN base in the Aditu district of East Timor near the border. ("The Sun" Melb. October 1, 1975.)

Early in October Michael Richardson reported official sources in Jakarta as saying that in addition to arming and training, Indonesia is providing 'advisers' to anti-FRETILIN troops in across-the-border combat ("Sydney Morning Herald" October 9, 1975.) At the same time FRETILIN had claimed that Indonesia had supported a big attack on Batugade involving planes, helicopters and shelling from a frigate off the coast. ("The Herald" Melb. October 8, 1975.) This was denied by Indonesia. The National Times (October 13-18, 1975) carried a report that Australian officials believe the attack was led by Indonesians and that according to intelligence reports, a DC3 Dakota and a B25 Mitchell bomber were used. The presence of these planes in Indonesian Timor has been confirmed. Bruce Wilson reports that the B25 bomber makes daily flights towards the east from Kupang, capital of Indonesian Timor. ("The Herald" Melb. November 5, 1975.)

Indonesia's opposition to observers reaching West Timor, let alone the border area ("The Herald" Melb. Nov. 5, 1975) proves they have something to hide. Jakarta's continued talk of the need for a restoration of peace in East Timor is absurd. It is chiefly because of Indonesia's direct involvement in the present fighting that peace does not exist now!

FIVE AUSTRALIAN NEWSMEN KILLED

The death of five Australian Newsmen in the border area of East Timor is a tragic indicator of what is happening there.

News that the newsmen were missing came with a report that FRETILIN had offered to release 100 prisoners of war in exchange for the television crew they thought were being held by anti-FRETILIN forces in Balibo ("The News" Adelaide October 20, 1975.)

First reports of the deaths quoted UDT president Lopez de Cruz as saying that bodies of four Europeans had been found in Balibo with the word 'AUSTRALIA' written on a wall ("The Age" October 21, 1975.) There have been a number of different stories as to how they died. UDT-APODETI-KOTA forces claim to have killed the journalists ("The Age" November 4, 1975.) A report on Radio Kupang - an Indonesian Government station - said the newsmen were killed because they were 'communists' ("The Age" October 24, 1975.)

A representative from the Australian Embassy in Jakarta was sent to Kupang to investigate the deaths ("The Age" October 23, 1975), but was prevented from going to the border area by the Indonesian government ("Canberra Times" October 30, 1975.) The Australian government indicated its own indifference by telling the relatives of the victims that they would have to pay to bring the bodies back to Australia (October 30, 1975.)

The full story will probably never be known. The Indonesians are clearly hiding something. It lends support to the claim that the newsmen were in fact filming Indonesian forces inside East Timor ("The Herald" October 21, 1975.)

This leaflet has been prepared by the TIMOR INFORMATION SERVICE. More detailed information is available from the SERVICE at 1st Floor, 100 Flinders Street, Melbourne. 3000. Phone: 63.9673 (day) and 48.3566 (evening.) The Service welcomes your help in obtaining information, preparing further newsletters and in the distribution of this material. Donations to facilitate this SERVICE appreciated.

Donations for the combined aid agency TIMOR RELIEF APPEAL should be sent direct to G.P.O. Box 9820 in all capital cities.