

TIMOR INFORMATION SERVICE

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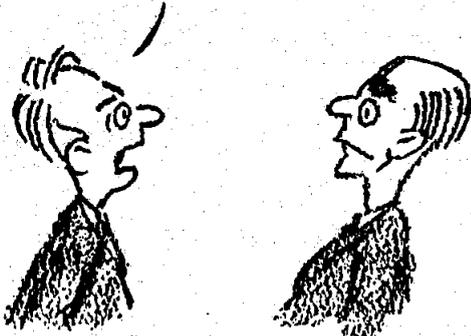
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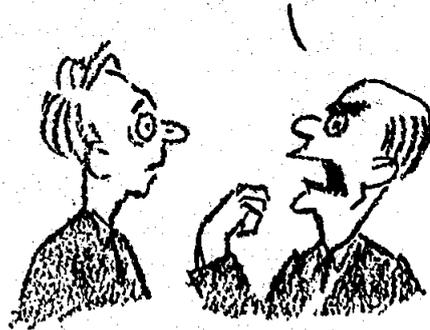
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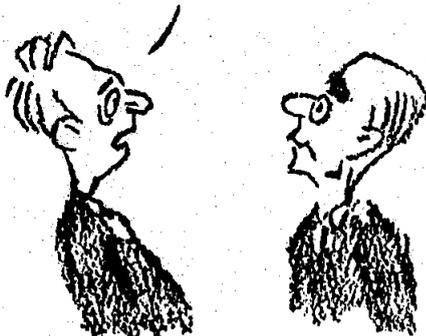
A COLONIAL OUTPOST HAS BEEN GRABBED
BY A LARGE UNDEMOCRATIC NEIGHBOR!



THIS MEANS WAR! THE FALKLANDERS
REPRESENT AN UNDYING PRINCIPLE!



I MEANT EAST TIMOR.



SOME PRINCIPLES DIE
QUICKER THAN OTHERS.



Nicholson

JOURNALISTS FIND FOOD SHORTAGES IN EAST TIMOR

The conclusions that American journalist Rod Nordland reached after 11 days touring 15 settlements in East Timor in May this year are hardly those which his Indonesian hosts would want publicised. His findings contrast sharply with those of three-day tourist and former Australian prime minister, Gough Whitlam.

Nordland saw widespread hunger and malnutrition. A new wave of famine is looming, he says, provoked by the disruption to crop-planting caused last year when the male population was forced into Indonesian military operations. He spoke with church workers who asserted that hunger and malnutrition occurred all over the country. Having been told that Uatolari was one of the worst-affected towns, Nordland queried the East Timor Vice-governor, Lopez da Cruz. Da Cruz denied any food shortage, claiming the village had a surplus of corn. But when the journalist and a party of officials landed at the village, they were confronted by dozens of malnourished children.

A Timorese nun, principal of the Baucau primary school, repeatedly defied her Indonesian watch-dog to tell Nordland of food shortages in Baguia, Quelicai, Laga and Baucau itself. In 'model' resettlement villages, he met families with bloated bellies and emaciated limbs. In particular, Nordland recorded the weights and vital measurements of 22 under-12s in Lahana resettlement village, outside Dili, and found 18 of them were chronically malnourished, their growth permanently stunted.

TUBERCULOSIS

Besides malnutrition, Nordland found other health problems such as malaria (aggravated by large-scale population resettlement in the malarial lowlands) and tuberculosis. A clinic outside Dili at Becora sees 160 patients a day, the majority of whom have tuberculosis.

Nordland was escorted around parts of the Atauro detention camp where Indonesian officials affirmed nearly 3,800 people are imprisoned because they have relatives known or thought to be Fretilin members. Colonel Kalangi told Nordland the people would be held until their relatives surrendered.

Other points Nordland was able to verify were the coffee-buying monopoly held by P.T. Denok, and the escalation of basic food prices to twice those prevailing in other parts of Indonesia. (Nordland's material is in Philadelphia Inquirer, 28.5.82)

DEVELOPMENT - BUT WHO BENEFITS?

Comments from Australian-born journalist Barry Wain (in *Asian Wall Street Journal*, 14th, 16th and 21st June 1982) point to some progress in practical development, but make no secret that the Indonesian presence is unwanted and unaccepted by the Timorese.

- Development has been undertaken on advice from Indonesian allies that this will 'wear down' opposition to Indonesia's takeover in the United Nations;
- East Timor's budget allocation for April 1982-March 1983 is \$US 83.6 million, 53% higher than the previous year, according to official Indonesian figures;
- At least 6,000 Balinese are to be settled in the fertile areas in the east and west of the territory where they will introduce new crops and "teach local farmers" how to produce a second rice harvest each year;
- Meanwhile, only one of the hundreds of coffee plantations expropriated by the invading Indonesian forces has been returned to its owner. P.T. Denok itself runs the largest plantation, as well as acting as sole coffee merchant and processor. Denok has extended into a monopoly sandalwood trade, as well as general trading and entertainment;
- The Indonesian-appointed governor Guilherme Goncalves faces accusations of misappropriation of coffee taxes, and has been forced to leave his residence. Goncalves says the accusations from the Indonesian provincial secretary, Kalangi, are lies circulated in a bid to unseat him.

80,000 IN OPERASI KEAMANAN

Wain's account of the food situation is not so graphic as Nordland's, but does suggest

the harvests will be about 30% below expected levels. He claims the Indonesian military operation last year is of only marginal importance as a cause of food shortages this year. However, he quotes Kalangi as saying 80,000 Timorese were called on to take part in the operation.

While differing in approach, both Nordland's and Wain's articles offer very useful data on actual conditions in East Timor. Copies of both are available from TIS for \$1.20 including postage.

SENATE INQUIRY UPDATE

The Australian Senate inquiry into East Timor is now well under way - but there is little sign yet of its likely outcome.

Hearings have already been held in Sydney, Canberra, Perth and Melbourne, following receipt of some two hundred submissions by the Senate Committee. Hearings will take place in all Australian state capitals except Adelaide and are expected to conclude in September. There are no indications that the Committee - or part of it - will visit East Timor.

Gough Whitlam was given a full day in Sydney on May 14th to repeat his already well-publicised denigration of the head of the Dili Church and the Australian Council for Overseas Aid. Whitlam had little new information to offer but extended his interpretation of the role of Mgr Lopes into the realms of fantasy. Whitlam argued that ACFOA and others found they needed a new issue with which to denigrate Indonesia. They had been using the death toll in East Timor to do this, but now that the argument had become "threadbare" he said, famine was chosen as the issue. Mgr Lopes' letter to Australian Catholic Relief should be seen in this context, Whitlam said.

WHO HAS GIVEN EVIDENCE ?

Others who have given testimony include ACFOA, the Campaign to Reunite in Australia the Families of Timor (RAFT), Australia-East Timor Association, Herbert Feith, David Scott, Richard Tanter and the Immigration department. TIS has presented detailed submissions on the death toll and the significance of army-created "strategic centres" in East Timor.

Two notable testimonies have come from former Australian journalist Peter Rodgers and the Australian department of Foreign Affairs. Rodgers' position is that the incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia is an irreversible fact and that the best way to help the East Timorese is through constructive aid and development programmes in cooperation with the government of Indonesia. Rodgers went on to concede, however, that conditions in East Timor have been very bad and that the death toll could be in excess of 100,000. He contradicted the Committee chairman's suggestion that it could be assumed the Indonesian government was acting in the interests of the East Timorese.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT NERVOUS

The Foreign Affairs department, on the other hand, conceded nothing. Its formal submission was notable for its "We don't know" position on claims of human rights abuses, but uncritically recorded Indonesian government claims about development expenditure in the territory. In verbal testimony the six representatives of the department, headed by an obviously nervous Gerry Nutter, followed a similar course.

The "don't know" reflex or the answering of questions by quoting tracts from Indonesian law statutes brought sniggers and smiles of disbelief from the press representatives at the hearing - though none of this was reported in the news media. The performance prompted one Committee senator to remark on how little the department seemed to know about East Timor.

The Committee of Inquiry has and will receive a solid body of evidence on Timorese claims about conditions in their country. Whether this evidence is convincing enough to prompt recommendations for a change in the "see-no-evil" approach of successive Australian governments towards Jakarta remains to be seen.

OPERASI KEAMANAN - EAST TIMORESE TELL THEIR STORY

The rationale for Operasi Keamanan - first reported in TIS no. 32 - was to eliminate Fretilin resistance remaining in the mountains.

The operation was launched by the Indonesian army in April 1981, intensified in July and continued through to the end of September.

Timorese males aged from early teens to late 50's were forcibly drafted to assist the army's sweep across the country from east and west, forming a human chain to entrap the resistance.

There are conflicting reports about the results of the manoeuvre. East Timor's Provincial Secretary, Indonesian colonel Kalangi, pronounced it a "great success", in which about 200 Fretilin members either surrendered or were killed. 60 or 70 of these "including some women and children", he said, were killed in one attack near the village of Lacluta. Kalangi claimed ten government soldiers and two civilians died in the operation, which reduced Fretilin numbers to a few hundred.

In contrast, the Apostolic Administrator of Dili, Monsignor da Costa Lopez, told American journalist Rod Nordland that at least one thousand civilians died during the exercise, including 500 who were killed in the Lacluta attack.

Whatever the final consequences of the operation, it was clearly a highly disruptive event for the East Timorese. Australian journalist Peter Hastings, who now defends the Indonesian takeover of East Timor, described the move as "highly counter-productive", while Kalangi himself admitted the procedure would not be repeated because of the damage it caused the government's public image.

The following quotes present pictures of how Timorese saw the operation and what they felt about it as it proceeded.

(These testimonies are drawn from diaries and interviews recorded by East Timorese in East Timor during the operation. Copies of the documents are held by TIS.)

1st July 1981:

Today in the centre of the eastern part of the island they begin a new campaign with the corrupt Indonesians forcing the oppressed people in Baucau. Some people escaped from the enlistments by in administrative posts like Quelicai, Laga, Baguia, Venilale and Vemasse none could escape. All the people including boys of eight years upwards had to go into the bush. Everywhere you could see mothers begging for their children and their husbands, also children without parents.

Another witness reported:

Nearly all day one could see mobilizations of troops, tanks, amphibious vehicles, war planes, military trucks full of people going to war in the bush, training Timorese men to go to the bush to kill their brothers.

The scene in Laclo:

On the 14th August 1981 (Friday) at 9.30 in the morning all men in Laclo went to the bush under orders from their Camat (administrator of the area).

The army ordered the boys from nine years old upwards to old men of 55 into the bush. It was said by TRIPEDA that the operation was for ten days, so people had to take the necessary amount of food. But, up till now (30 August) the people still have not returned from the bush, and certainly the food they took with them was for ten days only - they are believed to be starving in the bush. The foods that they took were roasted corn, ground and mixed with some sugar, and a little bit of rice they got from the market by exchanging with akar. People that went to the bush were unarmed, except the camat who carried a Z-3 gun and a pistol. The people had only arrows, swords and spears. There were 600 men. The purpose of the operation was to fight the Fretilin, I was told by one bapak, in the area of Aileu, Remexio, Besi-Lau and Lequidoe.

ANIN MAKAKA HU'U

'Whispers in the wind'



THEY ONLY BROUGHT FOOD

East Timor's isolation means that many events go unreported or only surface years later. Many such reports are certainly worth waiting for.

An East Timorese has recently told a story of the beginning of international aid programs in East Timor in 1979. He was in Maubisse when a helicopter arrived carrying a foreign aid worker. The local population gathered around the helicopter as it landed and when the 'white man' alighted from it, an old Timorese man walked from the crowd towards the official. He went down on his knees and pleaded with the official to help the Timorese to gain their freedom.

Our informant observed that it was a sad sight. He added that many East Timorese in the countryside thought that the arrival of these 'white men' in 1979 marked the beginning of moves for freedom from Indonesia. But the Timorese were disappointed to learn that they only brought food.

CRS - CONSISTENT AT LEAST

This column in TIS #35 noted the Indonesian government's use of an American Catholic Relief Service (CRS) letter which claimed early this year there was no famine in East Timor. The judgement was based on a visit to only two towns in Timor by CRS-Jakarta officer Patrick Johns. This letter has also been used by Gough Whitlam to denigrate Mgr Lopes, head of the Dili Catholic Church.

CRS-Geneva sent copies of the letter to ten major Catholic aid agencies in Europe. This is interesting because CRS does not rely on these agencies for its East Timor project but some of them do fund Dili Church aid programs. And if that doesn't suggest that CRS works to support Indonesian government claims about conditions in East Timor, consider the recent performance of the CRS-East Timor officer, Hans Meier-Eybers.

U.S. journalist Rod Nordland saw some kids at Uatolari in May this year "with classic distended bellies and stick-like limbs."

He asked the CRS man his opinion of their condition. "They look like healthy kids... a little dirty, but that is all" said Meier-Eybers. Nordland then sought the opinion of (Indonesian) doctor Kurniati who simply said: "You can see for yourself... these children are all malnourished".

Sometime later, the Indonesian military boss in Timor, Colonel Kalangi said of 1,000 tonnes of corn to be delivered to Timor to cover food shortages: "We won't just give it away. If you give people something for nothing, they get lazy". The CRS man agreed: "Yes, and soon you have an island of beggars."

(Sources: CRS letter from Robert Quinlan, Geneva, 18 Feb. 1982; Philadelphia Inquirer, 28 May 1982.)

PULAU BELAU

The people of the tiny island group of Belau (formerly Palau), about 500 miles north of West Irian, are debating whether to retain a clause in their Constitution making Belau a nuclear-free zone. This clause could prevent American warships and planes using the islands as a base.

Following two referendums which have decisively favoured the nuclear-free zone, some anti-clause islanders are resorting to the ultimate scare-tactic. If the U.S. is excluded they say, Indonesia may take control of the islands. They use East Timor as an example of what might happen.

QUIET DIPLOMACY

In October 1976, Australian Prime Minister Fraser and President Suharto agreed to work for family reunion of East Timorese in Australia separated by civil war and invasion. It took another 18 months for the two governments to agree that some 625 people would be permitted to leave East Timor and a further 8 months to actually begin the process.

By mid-1982, almost 6 years after the original agreement, still only some 370 of

those listed have left Timor. Most of those have had to bribe their way out. At present rates of progress, it will take another twelve years to complete this small program. So much for the success of 'quiet diplomacy'.

Australian foreign affairs officials say they don't understand why people want to

leave East Timor but they are forced by domestic pressure to complete the job. Those officials will be let off this hook if claims that International Red Cross is involved in a plan to fly the remaining listed East Timorese direct to Australia are true. But we will believe it when it happens.

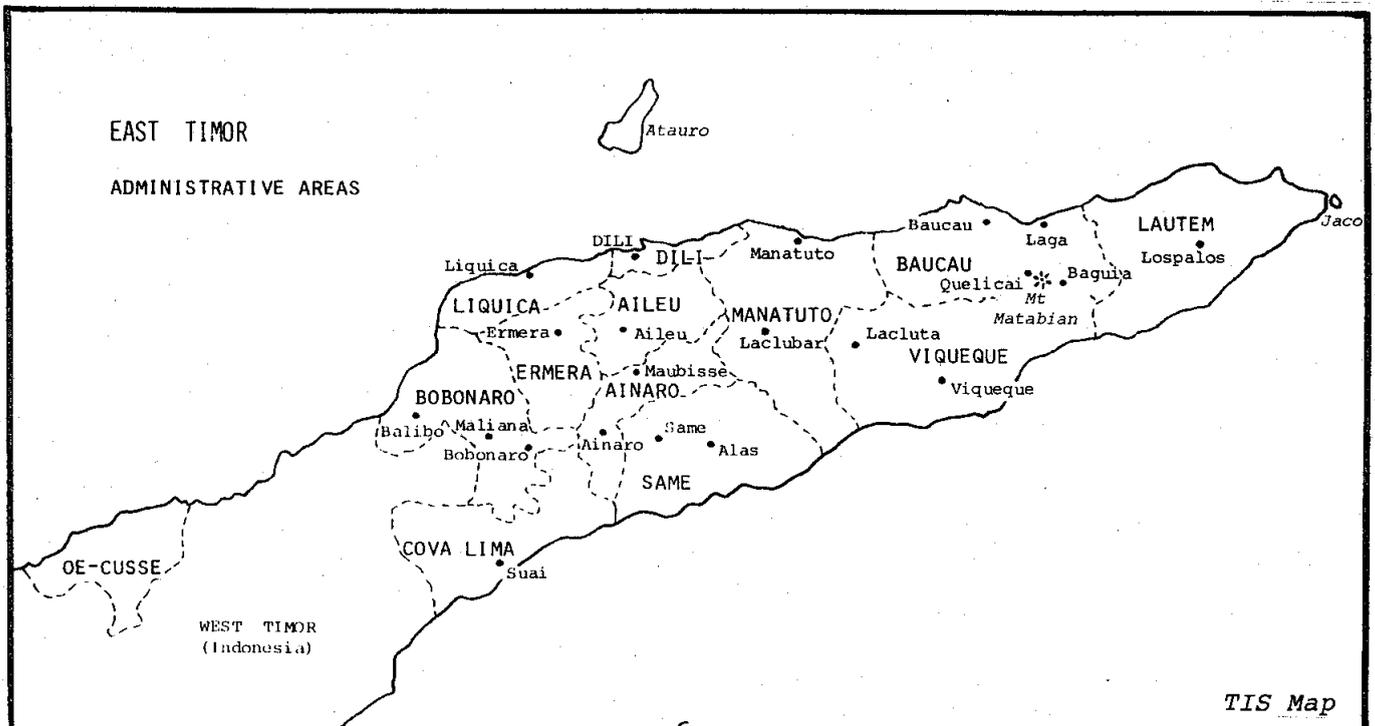
(Operasi Keamanan - continued from page 4)

The procedure on patrol:

On these forced patrols, the army usually placed themselves in the very midst of the people who had no weapons to defend themselves. With the army surrounded by the forced patrol of the Timorese citizens, they approached the strategic defence centres of the Fretilin and confronted Fretilin with the dilemma: either they attack the Indonesian army and kill the Timorese in the process, or they surrender and die to save their own people. An eye-witness reported in Dili that people were struck with admiration at the patriotism of the Fretilin. At first, the leaders of Fretilin attempted to send messages requesting the people to separate themselves from the Indonesians. But this was not possible for the people because if they attempted to do it they would be killed by the army, as they had no weapons to defend themselves. And so many of the Fretilin, including Xanana himself, decided to lay down their own lives. They preferred death in order to save the people on the forced patrols. Many eye-witnesses reported that the Fretilin did not counter the attack even though they had very good weapons.

Food shortages were common:

Another report states that one group of the forced patrol has spent the last five days without food and were only able to satisfy their hunger with leaves from the forest and water. Because they were incapable of going on any longer, they organised some of their number to meet the commander and demand food. And what did the commander reply? He shot his pistol into the air several times. And so without food and without any source of protection from the cold of the mountains, or sleeping facilities, many people have been suffering from fatal diarrhoea. Those who are too sick are left behind. They are left to die by the side of the path. And those who struggle on with great difficulty finally



return to Dili or other districts walking all the way.

Witnesses to atrocities:

Lately, many civilians, both adult and children, returned to Dili after their time on forced patrols. Many among them are suffering from sickness and severe wounds. They should have been admitted to hospital. But there is no longer any more room for them in hospitals. This particular group of unfortunate people has returned from the hills around Lacluta, a place where the Indonesian armed forces have again been carrying out mass murders on a large scale. They reported many different atrocities, apart from what they had done on 2nd September. Apparently many of those on the forced patrol were so shocked that they ran away in a state of confusion and insanity at the sight of what the military were doing to pregnant women and children. Pregnant women were stabbed and cut open in the presence of everyone and young children were dashed against the rocks, said these witnesses.

A tragic situation:

30th September 1981: Many groups of people, just skin and bones, arrived in Dili after returning from their forced patrol. Many people returning to Dili from Baucau met these groups walking along the road. Among them they could see young children who were no more than skin and bone. The army declared that they gave plenty of food to these forced patrols. They said there was so much food that each person was able to bring home plenty of food for those who had stayed behind. Oh, what a miserable lot they are. We have pity on them. Such behaviour and words might only invite cynical laughter if the tragedy was not so great that it makes us cry.

10 JUNE 1980 REVISITED

East Timorese still have differing opinions on the real story behind warfare outside Dili on the night of June 10, 1980.

Most insist that the fighting was between Indonesian forces and East Timorese resistance. Some still say it was "staged" by local military officials to justify their presence there and to justify action against known anti-integrationists in Dili.

Whatever the real story might be, there was a traumatic aftermath for Timorese in and around Dili. Hundreds of East Timorese on the hilly outskirts of the capital were forced to abandon their houses and were "resettled" at Lahane. Their original houses were destroyed by the army to create a 'no-go' zone around Dili. American journalist Rod Nordland visited the Lahane people in May 1982 and found very poor conditions and especially noted malnutrition among children there (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 28 May 1982).

The June 10 incident was followed by the first report of the use of Atauro as a prison island. In our account of the incident in TIS no. 29, we reported the arrest of about one hundred East Timorese and an account of the execution of three people. It is this latter incident to which we now return.

MONSIGNOR LOPES' LETTER

We present here excerpts from a letter sent by the head of the Dili church, Mgr Lopes, to the secretary of the Indonesian Bishops' Conference, Bishop Leo Soekoto. The letter, dated 12 July 1980, gives specific details of the executions of five Dili residents and a general reference to the executions of others.

In addition to its support for the frequent Timorese claims of summary executions being used in Timor, it is worth noting that the letter alleges that local Timorese 'civil defence' personnel were responsible for the killings. According to Timorese sources, most local people who become part of the military structure do so because they are obliged to or because it is a means of survival. Once in the army, they

have to obey Indonesian orders. Not surprisingly, this leads to animosity between Timorese - which is precisely the aim of the Indonesian army, these sources claim.

TIS holds a copy of the original (Indonesian language) letter:

Friday 13/6/1980 : Mr Norberto surrendered himself to the Resort Military Command accompanied by the Bishop of Dili, Mgr Martinho da Costa Lopes, P Ricardo who now holds the position of Vicar General of the Dili Diocese, and the Rector of the Seminary at Norsa Senhora de Fatima, P J Felgueiras SJ. Mgr Martinho strongly requested protection for Mr Norberto from a Resort Military Commander, that he should not be beaten or killed. The Commander accepted his request and promised not to maltreat Mr Norberto.

A few days later Mr Noberto was taken to Dare. There, in a Seminary hall which has been destroyed, the members of the civil defence beat him repeatedly and tortured him until he was near death. P Cardus was able to administer the Last Sacrament to him.

Saturday 21/6/1980 : Mr Norberto was killed and his body thrown into a ravine to the north of the Middle Seminary of N S Fatima.

Wednesday 2/7/1980 : Mr Anastacio was maltreated in the yard of the Dare Seminary. He was tied to a post in the volley-ball field then beaten repeatedly before the eyes of many people. After that he was taken to a place in the Seminary Garden to be killed. There a grave had already been prepared for him, because before the occasion of the maltreatment a few civil defence (personnel) had already ordered people to dig such a hole.

Thursday 3/7/1980 : Mr Jose Manuel Martins (the brother of Anastacio) Mrs Maria Barreto (wife of Jose Manuel Martins) and Mr Agostinho (brother of Maria Barreto) were killed in the Dare Seminary, after undergoing severe torture from several local civil defence (personnel).

Up until now, except for the body of Mr Anastacio, the bodies of these people have not yet been buried, but are still scattered about in the ravine to the north of the building of the Minor Seminary at Nossa Senhora de Fatima, in Dare. Because there is no permission from the authorities nobody has been brave enough to go down and get them to bury them.

After 10 June 1980, many people in Dili were mistreated then stabbed. The bodies of these people have been taken away in two trucks and thrown into one of the ravines not far from the city of Dili, by the side of the Dili-Baucao road.

TAPOL

The British Campaign for the Defence of Political Prisoners and Human Rights in Indonesia publishes a bi-monthly newsletter which is well worth reading.

In addition to increasing coverage of East Timor, Tapol provides detailed information on political developments in Indonesia, treatment of ex-political prisoners, West Irian.

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EAST TIMOR RELIGIOUS REFLECT ON THE INTEGRATION EXPERIENCE

This document was prepared by the Religious of East Timor for presentation at a Conference of Indonesian Major Religious Superiors (MASRI) in 1981.

We do not intend giving an analysis of the East Timor problem, but only to reflect together on the faith of the East Timorese people in the actual situation. . . We realise that by simply analysing the problem, we would not be speaking from heart to heart, our communications would still be shallow, and there might easily be misunderstandings which were not desired or which given the impression that we are always complaining or begging. It is true that the East Timorese Church has many needs which cannot be fulfilled even by the Indonesian Church.

. . . We recognise that a sincere communication demands a long process because despite many similarities of community and faith, we have very different backgrounds. We hope our communication will be successful, based on deep reflections from us all, both in our own groups, and as a group together. . . Our co-operation. . . will become a positive contribution to the Indonesian Religious as well as to the religious of East Timor, though there are differences in the history of the Church and its government.

We must all realise that the Indonesian National Army which liberated Indonesia from the colonial power in an astonishing manner will never liberate the people of East Timor from their colonial situation towards autonomy and national independence because our situation and reality are very different.

What has taken place during these five years is mostly invasion, war, looting, the destruction of the indigenous population, territorial subjections, colonial exploitation, the expulsion of the indigenous population who are replaced by people from other islands, military occupation and attempts at mass mobilisation of people (from 12 to 55 years) to make war on each other. In fact, the wish and desire of the East Timorese people from the beginning has been the right to determine their own fate and not mass murders such as have been done by their neighbours.

SITUATION AND EMOTIONAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE PEOPLE

The people of East Timor are suffering. They feel themselves misunderstood, although they know what is happening and are aware that they are being humiliated. But they remain in a very clear position concerning their ideals. Their faith stands firm and is strengthened although it is not always able to be expressed in words, but is seen with the eyes of faith by the Religious who accompany the people. The East Timorese religious feel solidarity with the people and because of that feel obliged to express the people's experience of faith. They are in the midst of the people, in a position which helps us to understand and formulate better the faith of the people, particularly because we know the language, beliefs and heart of the people.

That which was feared has truly happened; the people's way of life has been turned upside down and the basis of the community life has been destroyed. Masses of the population have been forced to shift in large numbers to places far away and unknown. This has already happened several times and in the last few months, many East Timorese have been exiled from their own homeland. Consequently, apart from having lost all their possessions, there is alienation and disintegration of families. There are continually new orders from above on 'security' which actually destroys and confuses the people. People who have been concentrated in (certain) areas and who live in dire poverty, in an atmosphere of false peace, have been forced to accompany the army to the mountains. A few months ago some villages were noted which were entirely empty of male inhabitants because all of the male work force was forced to leave their families, houses, fields, and work just to accompany the Indonesian army morning and night for months on end without any medical care and food at all. They were aged 12 to 55. The seriousness of the health

and the rebellious mood of those who return to their huts can no longer be denied.

In the meantime those who remain at home are the mothers, wives, daughters and older people who live out their faith in sadness in continual prayer.

. . . we do not yet understand why the Indonesian Church and the Universal Roman Church have up till now not stated openly and officially their solidarity with the Church, people and Religious of East Timor. Perhaps this has been the heaviest blow for us. . .

The people are now experiencing oppression without end, their rights are not acknowledged. The people do not have a voice, and live in fear. Indeed the people live in a situation of continual war, and thus must be silent, and submissive. The produce of their soil is seized, such as coffee, teak, cattle and even their property rights. The army monopolises everything. Confronted by this situation the people do not get an explanation for any of it. Thus they suffer more and feel their faith more.

The people are aware that their faith comes from God whose Word takes the form of social justice. This justice derives from the justice of God in His relations with His people. This justice must be built by the people themselves based on faith and co-operation with God and one's people who are still sacrificed to oppression. For us living the faith without serious endeavours for the building of social justice is making faith merely foreign and mystical. Creating justice together with the present Indonesian government is not possible, or not yet, although the people desire justice greatly. A faith which illumines the minds of the people cannot develop in a Christian action, because social justice has not yet come

(Continued on page 10)

into being. There is, as yet, no way out from the oppression from above. Because of that we, the religious, must always be alert and thoughtful that the faith of the people is not trodden on.

... Those who remain at home are the mothers, wives, daughters and older people who live out their faith in sadness and continual prayer.

COOPERATION WITH THE COMMUNITY AND RELIGIOUS OF INDONESIA

Our connections with the Universal Church, with the Religious and the wider world were suddenly cut off. We are the religious of East Timor who still together with the people were suddenly thrown into emptiness and alienation for six years until we became the silent Church of East Timor.

Now we are more aware of the faith and see that this experience was very useful because our faith was deepened and more felt in life as a gift from God. This faith says that we are still one with the universal Christian Church. It is precisely the dimensions of that universal faith which are being felt and deepened.

We are aware that we were 'persuaded' to have relations with the Indonesian Church which is the nearest Church and which is authorised by the Government and Army to straight away create relations with us. We hope that this 'persuasion' develops an honest meaning, both from our side,

the East Timorese Religious as well as from the Indonesian Religious, all based on a faith which will help us become one religious fellowship in the Church.

It was just with this aim that we wrote these reflections. Only based on honesty, sincerity and openness without prejudice and underhand behaviour can we build the Christian Church upholding the dignity of our people. We cannot put to one side or consider unimportant the misunderstandings and great difficulties which are a consequence of the actions of the government against the people, against the religious, the faithful and the Bishop.

These wounds must be healed via a long process from the two sides on the basis of sincerity in faith, hope and love.

We must also acknowledge that we do not yet understand why the Indonesian Church and the Universal Roman Church have up till now not stated openly and officially their solidarity with the Church, people and Religious of East Timor. Perhaps this has been the heaviest blow for us. . . We felt stunned by this silence which seemed to allow us to die deserted.

BASIC GROUPS

While these events have been happening the people have developed their efforts to become the community of God. Certainly there were such efforts earlier, but it is now more realised and strengthened because the need is felt to unite in the faith. Often we hear 'only God can make us safe'. This means: the security of religious belief faced with the facts of the

destruction.

Signs of this sort can be felt in groups of teachers, catechists, the basic groups which consider the efforts of the pastor in social and economic activities in various villages although with many difficulties and dangers. The same thing is experienced in clerical communities which serve the believers. Also becoming clearer is the simplicity and beauty of the faith which gives life to the calling of the community and of the religious.

We must now build, and find again that which was lost with a loving spirit in the field of housing, food, health, education, clothing, technical skills, agriculture, animal husbandry and trade. Because five years of war have damaged and destroyed all the existing types of infrastructure. That is indeed very difficult for the people themselves to do because they still face many robberies, burning of houses, difficulties in travel and especially, because of intimidation and terror. We are very concerned that a consequence of all these military operations and population movements in the last few months will be that the food and health situation becomes more serious as well as a rise in numbers of those lost or killed.

There have already been positive initiatives from missionaries and the Religious, with contributions from MAWI and other organisations to consider various kinds of difficulties and needs. We are aware that these efforts cannot be realised without participation from the basic groups.

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