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SUBJECT MEMO

SUBJECT: Translation of the article by Adelino Gomes, published in the Público of 6 September 1991, containing the video-filmed interview with Xanana Gusmao.

The video cassette reached Lisbon on 2 September and a note from the guerrilla leader, which was enclosed, said that recording had been started on the evening of 2 June and completed on the morning of 3 June because a break had been "imposed by the enemy".

Xanana Gusmao: "The solution for Timor will be a diplomatic one"

Challenging when stating his readiness to go to the palace in Dili to speak to governor Carrascalao and the Indonesian commander; humble when confessing that he lacks the academic background to understand certain books ("my weakness sixteen years back"), Kairala Xanana Gusmao, 44, former seminarian and construction worker, wanted to give a face and a voice to answer the questions that the Público had sent to him clandestinely, in the mountains of Timor. Speaking freely, in fluent Portuguese, the leader of the armed resistance - a role he assumed in the early 80s - talks about everything: about Portugal (which he criticizes moderately), FRETILIN (from whom he shows himself to be distant, but to whose "valour and glory" he pays tribute); Pope John Paul IV and his bishop, Ximenes Belo. Underground since 1975, he says that one thing he misses very much is peace. He reveals how the guerrillas eat and drink. He also re-launches the proposal for talks without preconditions, and he decides to risk an all-or-nothing position: if the Indonesians drag out the negotiations on the visit, Portugal should break off the talks. The interview, in full, follows.

Público - What minimum conditions to you feel must be guaranteed for the Portuguese MPs to take away with them a full view of what has been happening in East Timor?

Xanana Gusmao - Total freedom of movement of movement and contacts. Obviously this freedom of movement will depend on the capacity of the PPD (Portuguese parliamentary delegation) to set up its own general travel program and also its program within each locale it visits. But, it is now being said that a UN team will come beforehand to organize the schedule - which all goes to suggest that this freedom will be relatively restricted, because they will be confined by a plan which has been pre-established by the authorities of the occupying power, with the places already chosen, schedules rigidly set out and probably within a programme full of tourist visits to look over the progressive development, which would diminish or impede any chances of fruitful contacts.

Total liberty of movement and of contacts are the minimum conditions that one can insist on. But clearly a cease-fire would be of great importance, above all from the psychological point of view. I am referring not only to FALINTIL itself [East Timor National Liberation Armed Forces], but even more in the case of the population which is under Indonesian repression: in the case of a suspension (however temporary) of the hostilities between the opposing forces there would a very positive symbolic effect on the population - which would obviously enable both parties to have a more relaxed frame of mind and to be, therefore, more open and expansive in entering into contact.

In this kind of a situation the Indonesian military and its lackeys, would have our word that everything would go ahead in the most pacific and most orderly way possible, and that not one hair on the head of one Indonesian transmigrant would be harmed. A cease-fire situation would dispense with the necessity for a security framework which - we are certain - would be mounted around the PPD, which could give rise to provocative actions on the part of the Indonesian troops. We would like to receive the PPD in an atmosphere of joy and of tranquility. Which reminds me, do not be concerned about there being pro-Indonesian demonstrations and counter-demonstrations. All that is just propaganda on the part of Mário Carrascalao to stir up fear concerning the coming of the PPD. On this occasion at least, they will not have the slightest possibility of mobilizing the population to this end. On other occasions, if it were a visit by, let us suppose, Bob Hawke [the Australian PM], one could see them forcing the population from the interior to go to Dili. But, in this case, I think they would not dare because it would be a tremendous disaster.

P. - What places should they visit and which figures should they see?

X. - Actually, there are not preferences or priorities. Or rather, the so-called preparatory mission will set out these things. It would not be of any help for me to indicate these because if I did, then the Indonesian officials who will be part of this mission, would have a motive to raise obstacles when the time comes. For us, all and every part of East Timor stands as a source for fact-finding. As regards the people to contact, I believe the PPD already have some concrete ideas about this.

P. - Are you going to meet the delegation?

X. - I am thinking of doing so - and in any part of the territory whatsoever. Whether it is in the mountains or the forest, by the side of the road or in a remote strategic village, the important thing is that the PPD shows itself to be interested in doing this. Mr Quartim Santos appears not to want this [the Público heard yesterday at the showing of the video it laid on for state representatives, members of Timorese political parties and solidarity groups, that this diplomat, who holds the responsibility for the case of East Timor, was surprised at this "barb" from the Timorese leader because he had never expressed such an opinion, nor was it the opinion of the Portuguese government].

TALKS WITHOUT PRE-CONDITIONS

P. - what do you want to say to the MPs?

X. - Essentially I would like to hear from them as to what is the real Portuguese strategy on the problem. For my part, I would try to succinctly put

forward - my thoughts on the proposal for a dialogue without pre-conditions, aimed only at helping to find a solution which would satisfy all the parties involved.

P. - If that was not possible, for logistical or other reasons, would you consider that there would still exist the necessary conditions for the MPs to carry out their mission?

X. - I am confident that it will be possible, although (governor) Mário Carrascalao says that no-one knows where I hide myself "on the steep mountains" which, in his words, "are not for playing around on". The information which has reached us indicates that the Indonesian military authorities, in coordination with Intel (the Indonesian secret police), Lt Col. Gatot and his subaltern Harto, has moved in a contingent of soldiers which is carrying out a very discrete operation in the centre of Dili city. There has even been a story (laughs) very recently, that the "nangalas" [red-beret commandos] went to the bishop's house looking for me. On the way out, they were suspicious of a puppy. They took it with them. The best part of the story is that, when they got into the car they did not even notice that the dog had disappeared... Mário Carrascalao must be under the influence of that kind of story about me.

I, for my part, would not be at all concerned if the PPD scheduled a meeting at the Governor's Palace, given that they could not meet me on the side of the road. As regards the conditions, we are all prepared to guarantee to the PPD the minimum conditions for it to carry out its mission. (...)

Another matter that I think it important to straighten out: there will not be any civil war. All that is part of the propaganda campaign by Mário Carrascalao to intimidate people, both abroad and here within. We will do everything to avoid the slightest act of violence. I myself am now formally inviting Mário Carrascalao to take part in our celebration. I would like to chat with him, along with Panglima [the military commander in East Timor] on this occasion. An exchange of impressions always helps to relieve the atmosphere during, and especially after, a war. I hope that both of them will see the advantages of my proposal, because all of us would benefit from such a meeting.

VISIT OR BREAK-OFF TALKS

P. - If the visit does not take place, what moves do you feel should be made in the context of the negotiations between Indonesia and Portugal, which are underway at present under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General?

X. - It would be a shame if this came about. Such a setback would only serve to reflect precisely the limitations in the capacity of the administering power, which - as was spelled out by the President of the Republic, Mário Soares, at the opening of the Third Oporto Seminar on East Timor - does not have any other means at its disposal apart from defending the principles involved, where that is possible. We continue to learn to be realists. We will accept it unreservedly if it comes about.

Therefore, we would insist that these matters should be defined straight away, without delay: either the PPD comes here up to the end of August, or it does not come at all. If the visit cannot take place up until the end of August, then

Portugal should not accept the negotiations continuing any further. Because we want to provide internal conditions here such that Jakarta cannot withdraw the invitation, we are committed in practical terms to a pact of this kind and for this reason alone we have frozen the fighting. But we cannot accept that the situation continues at a standstill. We cannot continue to accept, let us say, this unloaded weapons situation.

I appeal to the State of Portugal: please, do not let this issue drag on. If Jakarta wants once again to prove that it is only interested in low manoeuvres to gain time, Portugal must take the initiative and act. I am in agreement with the formulation which was presented to the Standing Committee by the FRETILIN External Delegation. (...) If Portugal does not break off the talks, then we cannot accept responsibility for maintaining a climate of stability within the territory which would permit the option of the visit eventually taking place.

P. - If the visit does take place then what steps should be taken afterwards?

X. - After the report of the visit has been presented - which would not so much contain new facts, I would say, but rather information which goes deeper and has more insight - I believe that the UN Secretary-General will be likely, will indeed be obliged, to put the negotiations on an altogether different plane. Portugal would obviously have a duty to use to the full the data collected at first hand by the PPD. But [smiling], it is better really that I let the facts speak for themselves.

P. - What summing up would you make of the negotiations which have been taking place between Portugal and Indonesia under the auspices of Peres de Cuellar?

X. - All I am aware of is that the negotiations have been directed essentially or exclusively towards this eternally hypothetical visit of the PPD. On the balance one sees that, on the Indonesian side, they took a strong position at the outset, but there has now been a clear falling back, but they continue to find space to manoeuvre. And for the part of the Portuguese (whose government in terms of weakness I could compare with our guerrilla army...) there has been a clear lack of political boldness, there has been an absence of the sense to grasp opportunity and this derives from the fact that it does know exactly what it is doing.

The lack of a clear strategy, pursued with conviction, is really striking. I really must say this, because one hears talk of secretiveness, of feints, of evasiveness. All of this denotes a strategy at a standstill which also led us to temporarily adopt a wait and see strategy. If it was not for Kuwait, if it was not for PET (Parliamentarians for East Timor), well I don't know, but I can't advance any further. With regard to the UN, nothing was lost. It was merely underlined that it was a time to maintain the international community under the illusion of the "good offices". This was of benefit only to those under the wing of Rafeeuiddin Ahmed [Pakistani UN Under-Secretary-General], who was committed to convincing the international community that, in the face of adverse circumstances, it was the Maubere people who needed to be realistic.

If Portugal says that it falls to Portugal alone to decide on the material and if Perez de Cuellar should say that this is Portugal's responsibility then I

would merely draw attention to the pertinent UN resolutions referred to in the words of resolution 37/30 of the UN General Assembly.

FACE TO FACE WITH CARRASCALÃO

P. - Should the Timorese be called on to participate in the negotiations? When? Who should represent them?

X. - At this stage of the ball-game, perhaps it is a bit premature to pinpoint exactly when the Timorese should make their entry. It is our point of view that, after talks break down (if Indonesia continues with its negative attitude, then this would be the most coherent response) then the representatives of East Timor should be called in.

P. - When?

X. - If the visit takes place, there will be a sequence of actions following on from the PPD's report, then we also believe would be an opportune time for Timorese participation.

P. - Who should represent them?

X. - In principle it should be the CNRM (National Council of the Maubere Resistance, based within East Timor) or simply the Nationalist Convergence (the coalition between FRETILIN and the UDT). But I want to say that in appropriate circumstances I would not object to a face-to-face meeting with Mário Carrascalao, if for no other reason than to facilitate dialogue.

P. - What actions do you think should have been carried out, but were not, on behalf of the Timorese people by Portugal?

X. - I prefer not to sit in judgement on the actions of Portugal. I merely try to understand Portugal's great poverty. To insist that Portugal should have done more can lead us to the tendency to absolve ourselves from the duty to demand that we ourselves do all within our capability, because we are dealing with what is after all our own liberation, and ours alone. And what more can say about what Portugal did or did not do, when I read that the Standing Committee complains of a lack of logistical support and that the MNE (Portuguese Foreign Office) keeps everything secret.

P. - Now that two years have passed since the visit by Pope John Paul II to Timor, what do you feel about the Pope's attitude?

X. - I read about the politics of liberation a few years back. Frequently, the Latin American dignitaries referred to the Pope as if he was a Pole living in Rome. The Kurds are more the children of God and their sufferings are more keenly felt by the Pope. The Turkish priest [a Turkish Cardinal who was in Jakarta to prepare for the Pope's visit] stated that it would be inconceivable that the Holy See could sacrifice its higher interests for a handful of Catholics under pressure from Pancasila [Indonesia's constitutional ideology]. In other words, it is the politics of those who do not engage in politics. St Peter must be listening to us (smiles), so much so that there is a rumour going around in East Timor that the venerable apostle does not open the doors to the Indonesians. I hope the same goes for the pro-Indonesians...

P. - How are the relations, at present, between the Resistance and the Church in East Timor? What do you think of the latest positions adopted by the bishop of Dili, Mgr. Ximenes Belo?

X. - With the Timorese clergy relations are excellent, in a spirit of unity of principal - apart from three or four local priests. As for Bishop Ximenes Belo, unfortunately he has not changed at all since the days when I knew him personally - the lack of firmness, the lack of conviction is his most characteristic feature. I can even suppose that it is possible that this has become a sort of playing off of the various interested parties. I do not want to interfere in the affairs of other organizations, but I am led to believe that the Open Letter of the lay diocesan members [made public in May 1990] reflected a complex internal situation which finds its explanation in the end in the restricted room for manoeuvre within the Church itself - manoeuvres initiated or simply carried out by Bishop Ximenes Belo. Portugal(...) It is all in there [smiles], Bishop Ximenes appears not to have found himself as yet.

NON-PARTY ALIGNED GUERRILLAS

P. You left FRETILIN in December 1988. Later you asked to be readmitted. What are your relations with that party now?

X. - I left the FRETILIN in December 1987. Nowadays relations are less tense, but a lack of political trust still exists and I neither created or desired this.

P. - And the rest of the guerrilla commanders, do they belong to FRETILIN or not?

X. - All of them except the concept of non-party alignment. They do not belong to FRETILIN nowadays.

P. - Is there any commander or member of the Resistance who is a member of, or represents, other parties in Timor?

X. - No, there is not.

P. - What is the actual role of the students in the anti-Indonesian resistance?

X. - I would define it as essentially one of continuity. The new generation felt that it had fallen to it to keep the flame of resistance burning; this call, that the students answered so promptly, has met with a great response in the popular and global resistance. The older generations, having lived through two wars, thus see a palpable result of their grand sacrifices, an answer to their anxieties, their hopes and their faith.

On the other hand, it is the practical confirmation of the fact that people who die for their ideas are immortal. Lastly - and I believe this is the most important - it represents a moving towards a renovation of ideas, it is an incessant search for innovative concepts, a desire to explain the present and a more or less careful preparation for the future which is theirs.

P. - Is the civil resistance non-party aligned or are its actions subject the

leadership of the armed struggle?

X. - The resistance is not totally non-party aligned, if we take into account FRETILIN's great political influence. But it is non-party aligned, or rather party de-aligned, in that its actions are subject to the leadership of the armed struggle.

Those people who are disturbed by this situation, of shall we say, party or political disorganization (which is not altogether true) are those who do not have the minimum of contact with this war situation. Both the broad mass of the people and the FRETILIN members themselves conceive of the present moment of struggle in terms of freeing the fatherland, and not in terms of, for example, FRETILIN being the only representative, or the being vanguard, or of FRETILIN being in control, having a majority or even, of FRETILIN carrying out the struggle and not the UDT.

They do not deny the relevant role played by FRETILIN, but it is understood that the UDT could come to win general elections if FRETILIN, having eventually come to power, did not comply with its electoral promises. They believe that if this came about in the future, that the population could not remain the slaves of the "katuas" [veterans]. This perception of the future does not detract one whit from the glory of FRETILIN in the present.

P. - In what areas of the territory do the guerrillas act at the moment?

X. - I believe that a little map was published in 1984-5, made by our enemies themselves, in which the placement of the guerrilla groups could be seen. Today, although with successive alterations produced by the widespread setting up in our areas of strategic villages, I can say, or I should say, that the placement in these areas is, in general terms, the same as it was.

P. - How many armed combatants are there?

X. - I prefer to say that, since 1970, the same 50 fugitives from the eastern end still remain [an ironic reference to the Indonesian authorities who, since that time, have always spoken of the same dozens of fugitives].

P. - After the talks in March 1983 did you have any further contacts with the Indonesian authorities, either military or civil? When, where, and with what results?

X. - Personal contacts no. Towards the end of August 1989, Panglima approached two young students who had gone into the bush to celebrate the FALINTIL Day with us. They told the man that we had also been talking about autonomy. He showed some interest, and said to the two that autonomy would be better than war and suggested to them that they re-establish contact with me. Although knowing that "the devil in hell is less of a liar", in the words of a wag who writes to me, I accepted an informal contact, endeavouring to have present a representative of the International Red Cross and a representative of the bishop (in the absence of the bishop), so as to avoid acts of treachery by the Indonesian authorities.

The grand Intel agent Olandina Caceiro, who had become something of a patron to the two youths - one of them was called Armindo, son of the ex-first sergeant

José da Silva, and the other was called Fernando - wanted to take part in this meeting himself. We knew from other sources that he was preparing an operation to achieve my capture or elimination. Before this, in December 1989 [sic], the bishop had written to me personally asking for us to meet for us to resolve the problem, going as far as to state the willingness of Canalini [the Papal Nuncio in Jakarta], the Holy See to arrange, through the International Red Cross, for the guerrillas to be repatriated.

He stated in the letter that Portugal had recognised integration with Indonesia; that the Nationalist Convergence could not see eye to eye and that FRETILIN was divided into three parties; that only his Church was united; that the corridors of the Vatican were indicating a solution in Bahasa Indonesia [the official language] "that each kambupaten [district] would have a battalion for pembangunan [development]"; and, obviously, there was nothing more to be done, seeing as his own letter to the UN Secretary-General had not even obtained a reply. The letter finished off with "politics is the art of the possible", which must have been taken from the paperback book "Black and White".

P. - Do you believe in a solution for the next few years? What do you think will prevail: diplomacy (through the UN), politics (by a change of regime in Indonesia) or military action?

X. - We have been fighting for 16 years to achieve this. I believe that it will be a political solution, ground on which both Portugal and ourselves could move on a broader field of action and with more promising results. Depending on the actual circumstances, a change of regime in Indonesia could be favourable for us. However, I think this is not likely to come about soon. I can only begin to think in terms of change in Indonesia when the democratic opposition starts to show a real capacity to mobilize the masses. The regime is still very strong and the people seem to be very wrapped up with "pembangunan"...This is merely a personal opinion, without any great knowledge of what might be happening.

P. - Tell us about your everyday life.

X. - It is entirely devoted to the struggle between internal difficulties of all kinds, and the necessity to obtain a global view of things and the various angles involved.

P. - Do you sleep in houses or in the bush?

X. - 90% of the time I sleep in the bush with my companions.

COFFEE AND PALM WINE

P. - What do the guerrillas eat?

X. - Everything that is capable of being digested by the stomach, from what we pick in the wild - natural resources - to what is picked on the plains and in the plots belonging to the population.

P. - What do you drink?

X. - Normally coffee, because we have lots of small coffee plantations in the areas we control. It depends on the area and on the season, some groups extract

wine from palm trees, but this is only for special occasions like weddings, feast days, or to celebrate a meeting between groups.

P. - Do you feel yourself a man who is constantly driven or do you have times of letting up? What do you do in these moments?

X. - Driven? Not at all. I have remained in some locations for periods of three to twelve months or even fifteen months. I move my base when the signs of our presence are likely to attract the attention of the enemy. Times of letting up I would call the periods, more or less long, when I am together with the forces of one or more of our groups.

That is where I deal with their problems, learn what they are feeling about the enormous difficulties of war. It is where we set out new ideas, formulate new plans of action, reaffirm our convictions, our principles, our determination, our ideas.

I use these occasions to treat the wounded, to play with the children, to help my comrades in arms in other activities, in the kitchen for example - to make "sagu" [flour got from palms] or to pick "caleics" [a flat nut-like fruit which can only be eaten after having been cooked a number of times] - or I use the opportunity to sew my own clothes.

P. - What do you miss the most, compared to your everyday life when you were a free man? Going for a stroll or to the cinema or lunching in a restaurant?

X. - Your question suffers from a time warp. I have been in the bush for 16 years. I do not have hankerings for all of that, or indeed for anything. The struggle we are involved in is above all else. As you may have heard I was in Dili and went back to the bush with a greater will to continue the struggle. I want to add that that was not the only occasion in which I have been in contact with ways of life which could awaken past memories. I have been trying always to educate myself in this aspect. What I, perhaps, truly miss is peace, and I will continue with the struggle to achieve it.

P. - Have you felt despair about the struggle at all? In what moments?

X. - If you would believe it, never once. I have experienced, yes, moments of great anguish and of psychological pressure, because I felt myself unable to avert some disasters, like for instance that which occurred in Aitana, in September 1981, just six months after our reorganization, or when I moved into the central region, in 1980. The emptiness I faced really frightened me. Neither Mau Hunu, nor Tchai nor I myself - the three surviving members of the CCF (FRETILIN Central Committee) - were in the least bit personally prepared to carry out the struggle in that state.

Later the war hardened my feelings. Whatever difficulties we encountered were being perceived in their context and always with the firm purpose of overcoming them or at the very least getting around them.

PORTUGUESE RADIO - NO USE

P. - What sources do you have for keeping abreast of world events? What radio station do you listen to?

X. - The radio; BBC, Radio Switzerland International, Radio Netherlands. Voice of America, because of its transmission hours, we only listen to it when certain events warrant being followed carefully, such as the recent signing of the [Angolan] cease fire in Lisbon. I used to follow RDP International [Portuguese radio] but I realized I was sacrificing sound quality, given that the programmes are not very attractive to the listening audience in East Timor. Along with world events (smiles) it often limits itself to being an outpost of Portugal.

I also get another station around 18.00 local time but, even Radio France International at the same time, in Spanish for Latin America, and Radio Spain for abroad are the most interesting, because they give a very coherent world panorama and a good follow-up on events. In English, Australian radio and the BBC.

P. - Do you get any newspaper? What? What books do you read?

X. - I will take this opportunity to ask you to send me the Público, because up to now I have been getting only clippings which refer specifically to the situation in Timor which are compiled by CIDAC [The Amilcar Cabral Information and Documentation Centre in Lisbon which gives logistical support to various solidarity groups including the CDPM]. AS for books, it is very difficult. I received one last year a gift from its author Jill Joliffe [the Lisbon-based Australian journalist who specializes in the East Timor question]. It was only two months ago in Dili that I succeeded in receiving Ramos-Horta's "Funu".

I have also been sent books whose political thoughts were expressed mainly from a religious point of view and I cannot say that they corresponded to my necessity for a deeper knowledge. As well as having a rather synthetic format, the terms used, the philosophical and ideological references, were above, very much above, my capacities. You have to understand that I do not have any theoretical base from my schooling - neither in philosophy nor in politics. What I do have, if I may say so, is a training from this practical school of war. A school which you could say is indeed audio visual (smiles), in so far as I listen permanently to that broadcasts, because of the imperious necessity of our struggle. It is as a result of this that the concepts I have got and the conclusions I draw, inevitably suffer from being rather fragmentary. Reading, truly, was my weakness 16 years ago.

P.- What sort of social and political organization would you put forward for East Timor?

X. - A democratic society, one where respect for civil liberties would be guaranteed by the Constitution. A multi-party society, where free and democratic debate assures a free initiative and awakens a collective involvement in the countries development. A healthy society, where the fight against corruption goes hand in hand with the fight against misery; one where concern about health would not be removed from a clear definition of a successful policy to increase production and where life style would not be allowed to rupture the framework of an essentially agricultural country.

A society which wants to eradicate backwardness, where, hand in hand with the education of new generations, the mass education of the population must be considered a higher priority and must be more productive than a simple literacy campaign; one where the love for oneself and for advancement should not, on the

one hand, promote an excessive growth of a leisure class, and on the other, must be harnessed in terms of predicting the future environmental consequences for half an island as tiny as ours is.

A society which concerns itself with the gradual reaffirmation of its own identity, in those areas which are visibly eroded by foreign domination; a society which would have to safeguard its own traditions and national culture, its languages, its values, its philosophy, its mentality.

"I DO NOT WANT TO BE IN POWER"

P. - Would the CNRM be willing, given that self-determination was achieved, to stand for election on the same footing as other political groups either already existing or which might come about at a later time?

X. - The question assumes that I would be prepared to assume power, which does not make sense, or that I would still be linked to a certain political group [FRETILIN], which would not be in accord with my non-party alignment. Neither is the CNRM a political group in itself, nor does FALINTIL intend to be something like what you refer to so when you talk of equality of conditions with other political groups. The problem is not in accepting or not, free elections. The leadership of the resistance advocates such elections between the diverse political groupings which exist in East Timor.

P. - Would you accept a solution based on an acceptance by Indonesia, underwritten by the UN, of a special autonomous status, guaranteeing respect for human rights, and preserving Timorese culture, religion and identity, endowing territories with their own governing organs, within the framework of the Republic of Indonesia?

X. - I have already said that I accept talks without pre-conditions. This implies that it would only be around the table during talks with all the interested parties, including necessarily the Maubere people, that I will discuss all the possibilities for a solution. For each possibility which is presented there would be frank and serious debate, given that each one of them will be rich in perspectives concerning its implications, based on its nature. A dialogue in such conditions could get around obstacles and will have to establish platforms by consensus, which arrive naturally at a just and global solution to the conflict.

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