

EAST TIMOR

NEWS DOSSIER

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Editorial :

September 1987.

Dear Friends,

Greetings.

The last two issues of our "Dossier" were delayed in its production and despatch. We apologise for these delays. These were mainly due to the travels of member of our group and also other urgent issues which took our attention.

We are currently soliciting for your opinions and comment on the "Dossier". We will be undergoing an evaluation soon with some supporters and friends in Hong Kong. This will help us to determine how we will proceed at the end of this year. The "Dossier" was originally published on trial for one year (six issues). We will have to decide whether it is of any use before we continue in its production. Hence please send in your comments.

We reproduce in this issue a letter from Xanana Gusmao, the commander of Fretilin, to a priest in East Timor. We also include an article on the elections held in East Timor in April as well as some news on the issue.

Our best wishes to your work.

In Solidarity with the East Timor People,
East Timor Concern Group, Hong Kong.

Xanana Appeal To The Church

EAST TIMOR LINK has received a copy of a letter which Xanana Gusmao, military commander of Fretilin, wrote on June 27 last year to a priest in East Timor. It is a passionate document, as the leader of the liberation movement himself admits, which throws light on the tension which exist within East Timor's church as members of the clergy ---- and naturally lay Catholics too ---- struggle to respond with moral courage to the acute difficulties and political pressures which they face every day in carrying out their mission.

In writing this letter, it was clearly Mr. Xanana Gusmao's intention to raise important issues of principle engaging the responsibility of the Catholic church in East Timor. He makes a number of very direct criticisms. At the same time, readers should bear in mind that this was a private letter, not intended for wide publication. Although he speaks with the authority of his position, we think it is unlikely that Mr. Gusmao was setting out a formal statement of Fretilin policy.

Because the letter has come into the public domain, and is an important document, we reproduce it here. For reasons of space, we have had to shorten it slightly, but believe we have included all the most salient points. (Note: the sub-headings have been inserted by EAST TIMOR LINK.)

"Reverend Father, (...) companion in struggle and brother of the Maubere people. The position you and other priests have taken is both a great consolation and a moral and political inspiration to us, whereas those who were born here but do not recognise the rights of our people only deserve our disdain!

It is true that the Church is not involved in politics in the narrow sense of the word. But, on the other hand, it cannot remove itself from the milieu in which it is integrated because those who make it up, laity and clergy, are living members of the society in which the church is inserted.

The Church's Mission

Fretilin does not regard the Church as an abstract entity, and even less as unreal or fictitious, because its prophetic mission (I would say its mission of liberation) is in practice to support the people in their struggle for liberation. If the Church's concept of liberation does not lead to integral and direct involvement, how do you explain the position taken by Cardinal Sin of the Philippines, Bishop Tutu, or by Churches all over the world in defence of solutions based on the rights of people? Direct involvement means that the Church must affirm the fundamental rights and freedom of society. We think that if the Church stays out of politics it only places itself over society and becomes a dead structure, a structure without a mission in society, a situation which will only debase the Church and isolate it from the people's rights and freedom.

Reverend Father, aren't we in danger of being deluded by the 'fantastic conversions' which have occurred? Whereas if we are objective and keep our feet firmly on Timorese soil, we have to admit that the reason for these miraculous conversions is really the people's search for protection allied to their rejection of the occupier.

It is not our intention to offend the Church by saying these things (which are readily apparent to anyone with good sense) but simply to affirm that our people want to maintain their hope and belief that the Church of East Timor will continue to interpret faithfully their aspirations, anxieties, wishes and struggle. If not, the Maubere people may come to lose the confidence they have placed in the Church if they come to think that the Church opposes what they have sacrificed their lives for. It would be the Church's own fault if these quick conversion were to turn around.

(...) The Church cannot be satisfied with numbers which are illusory if not accompanied by real practice of faith.

We know and we lament the 'holy war' the enemy is waging in the controlled areas, leading to 'ad hoc' conversions followed by acceptance of doctrine. Nothing is more prejudicial to the Church we respect. We know the difficulties, the good intentions and the efforts being made, but we think that unless the Church avoids self-satisfaction the essentials of conversion will be reduced to simple statistics.

Differences among the Clergy

We believe that the circumstances of war generated the massive conversions and that this demonstrates the trust of our people in their Church. This trust will be compromised if the Church does not place itself alongside our people. Frustration will follow and faith will be dissolved in 'luliks' as the real bearers of the people's aspirations. I am not a priest or a catehist but I know several occasions when people have turned to the Church at a time of problems, sickness or affliction but, right after, have returned to their practice of 'hamulak'.

Reverend Father, we do not deny or forget the firm and brave attitudes taken by the Timorese Church and we know that our struggle would be much more difficult but for the indispensable support the East Timorese Church has been giving the resistance! However, I know that there are some Goanese priests in Timor who are 'seratus persen' (one hundred percent) Indonesian and that Mgr Belo himself (although he does not deny the rights of the East Timorese people) defends integration under the facade of 'autonomy'. These political differences within the Church will reduce the capacity of the Church to represent, as it has in the past, with authority and a clear voice ... which must be heard!

The blind theory defended by the 'one hundred percenters' is a vile treason to our people. By it some members of the Church legitimise crime and injustice thereby making impossible real peace in the homeland of the Maubere people.

Peace is only possible in East Timor with the consent of Fretilin. Any effort to impose peace by surrendering (promoted by the puppet governor to induce guerrillas to return to their villages for reintegration in society) will lead to the continuing of the war. We are capable of attacking and destroying villages and camps in most parts of the country, but we do not do it to save the people further suffering. As a liberation movement we have the sacred duty to continue to affirm to our one thousand times heroic people that we will continue fighting, whatever the price, until we are victorious or exterminated.

Respect for the Church

The trust and respect we have for the Timorese Church will give way to deep frustration if the Church turns away from our people. Reverend Father, that is not a threat (for God's sake) but we must confess that the disillusionment would be too upsetting for us to easily forget it! I refer to the Church as a whole, for all of us in the bush recognise profoundly that many priests have suffered together with our people not by sensational words but by their firm and continued actions and tough and persistent efforts beside our people with Mgr Martinho Lopes at their head and sons like Fr. Francisco Fernandes.

His Holiness John Paul II, in an address to catechists, stressed the most important mission carried out by them, declaring that the Church will always need them. We have the same opinion of the Timorese priests, the true sons of East Timor and those foreign priests who have given themselves to the cause of our people, and a small number of well-formed catechists. However, we can completely do without the 'one hundred percenters'; these second class Indonesian citizens can work for the Republic of Indonesia to convert the large numbers of Moslems in their country. But they will not leave by themselves because they are protected by a rich governor who supports their plan for autonomy, but as part of greater Indonesia! There they can claim their right to speak Portuguese freely and talk in Tetum, about the rupiahs they have been able to make.

An Appeal to Unite

Reverend Father, forgive our language and uncontrolled state of soul, but it is difficult for us to tolerate certain individuals who ignore the disgrace, destruction and death of our people, which is no different to any other people in the world. In the South Pacific a small number of islands with a few hundred thousand people have been able to form states. Maldives, Seychelles are the smallest points on the map but are independent countries. The Timorese people with their natural resources which will guarantee development cannot be independent just because Indonesia does not want it. The message sent to the students in Indonesia (I presume Your Reverence knows of this) was to answer the vacillating position taken by Mgr Belo and the 'one hundred percenters'.

Scrawling under pressure of anger because some renegade sons of our people want to deny the rights of our people, I request you Reverend Father to pass on our message to the other priests and the appeal of the leaders of struggle to settle the political differences in the Church and reunite them in one authoritative voice.

Finally I apologise for the character of this message but I think these are crucial problems being debated by our people at a time when an inadequate position taken by the Church will only result in suffering and continuation of war allowing the enemy to exterminate our people.

With great esteem,
Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao
Commander in Chief, Falantil
East Timor, 27 June 1986

April "Elections"

The governor of East Timor, Mario Carrascalao has continually stressed that there have been three elections in East Timor. They were supposedly in 1976, in support of integration (at a time when Indonesian troops controlled Dili and a few coastal areas and war was raging everywhere), in 1982, (when the number of votes cast originally exceeded the number of voters) and now in April 1987.

The "elections" in April were held to appoint members to the Central parliament, to the provincial assembly and for the local or sub-district assembly.

Democratic and Representative ?

As in the rest of Indonesia, only three parties were permitted to take part. They were the Golkar party (the party of the government), the PPP (the Development Unity Party, a Muslim party) and the PDI (the Indonesian Democracy Party, a Christian nationalist party). None of these parties have roots in East Timor. The three political parties which operated prior to the Indonesian occupation - Fretilin, UDT and Apodeti - have either been banned or dissolved.

A candidate for the ruling Golkar party is Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja. He is not an East Timorese and is well-known for his defence of Indonesian occupation. He was reported as saying that a high turnout for the elections would mean that it could no longer be denied that "East Timor is part of the big family of the Republic of Indonesia". There are doubts whether Kusumaatmadja will eventually represent East Timor in the parliament even though elected. Candidates for the other two parties are all Indonesian.

All official political parties in Indonesia are required under law to accept the national ideology, "Pancasila" (or five principles - belief in God, humanism, nationalism, democracy and social justice). This means that all the candidates effectively present the same political ideas and values, which, at present, are those of the government's. In practice in East Timor, these rules prevent candidates from referring to the record of the government or the military, or advocating autonomy or independence.

Secret Ballots ?

Special voting conditions were implemented in East Timor (and Irian Jaya). Elsewhere in Indonesia, voters are given ballot slips with the emblems of the three official parties on them. The voter then pierced the box next to the emblem of the party of their choice and then place this slip in the ballot box. This is done for elections of all three levels of government. Hence, also three ballot boxes. In East Timor, voters were given a voting slip to be placed in the box with the emblem of the party of their choice. Hence in East Timor there were nine ballot boxes.

This means that voting is not secret and can be observed by officials. The official explanation for this special voting arrangements is because of the high illiteracy rate. In fact the method of piercing voting slips in rest of Indonesia is also explained in terms of the high rate of illiteracy.

The Result

As in 1982, the election results in East Timor were among the first to be announced in Jakarta, showing a turnout of 362,507 votes, or 100.52% of the 360,144 registered voters announced before the elections. The results as compared to 1982 are as follows :

	1987	1982
PPP	2,654 (0.73%)	675 (0.22%)
Golkar	339,231 (93.7%)	309,608 (99.45%)
PDI	20,163 (5.57%)	1,044 (0.34%)

The Interior Minister General Rustam Soepardjo denied any suspicions of foul play in vote counting by claiming that the excess of voters was due to the number of Indonesian sailors, civil servants and construction workers in East Timor during election time. However, the general made no attempt to explain why, in four regencies, in Dili (the capital of East Timor) and three inland regions, the turnout was well above one hundred percent. In Aileu, the turnout was 327.26%.

All parliamentary seats for East Timor will go to Golkar. However, in the provincial assembly, the PDI will have two seats compared with the Golkar's thirty-four and nine appointees from the armed forces.

Proof of Acceptance

United Nations ambassador Ali Alatas claimed that the April elections would prove that "the East Timorese have recognised the fact that they are also part of Indonesia".

However, there are over 20,000 Indonesian military personnel in East Timor. Apart from dubious voting procedures, a non-participation in the elections would mean being branded as a Fretilin supporter. This would surely endanger the life of that person, as Fretilin is illegal and at war with the Indonesian government. Hence the "high" voter turnout.

UN Refuses Invitation

The United Nations refused an invitation by the Indonesian government to observe the elections. An observer has said that this clearly demonstrates that the UN does not want to "countenance in any way the "farce of democracy" Indonesia will present to the world in the days following April 23".

Portugal has condemned the elections saying that "having illegally invaded and annexed East Timor, Indonesia cannot subsequently validate its illegal acquisition by conducting elections. In this sense, whether the elections are free or not is entirely irrelevant".

Source : Tapol, Timorlink, Pacific News Bulletin, Inside Indonesia.

News

The UN initiative: Talks stutter

The conditions under which the Portuguese and Indonesian governments are discussing East Timor continue to become ever more troubled and difficult. Relations between the two countries are having an impact not only on all aspects of the East Timor issue, but on other matters as well.

The first real evidence that the UN talks may reached a point of crisis emerged at the UN Human Rights Commission in February 1987. The Portuguese representative not only made a more vigorous intervention than in previous years, but exercised, for the first time ever, Portugal's right of reply. The Indonesian delegation's intervention, responding to Portuguese remarks about the coming elections in East Timor, was outstandingly sour in tone. Portugal raised the matter of East Timor no less than three times at different forums during the Session.

Stung by an Indonesian reference to New Caledonia, the French delegation also raise the matter of East Timor --- another historical first. The French representative hoped that the people of East Timor would be able at some point in the future to express a choice about their future.

Apparently, the Portuguese and Indonesian delegations involved in the New York talks did indeed begin to address the question of sovereignty --- spurred on to some degree by the knowledge that elections will be held in East Timor in April.

There is some confusion about the Portuguese negotiating position. It is reliably reported from Lisbon that, as early as last Autumn, the Portuguese government had considered, and ruled against, a proposal under which Portugal would give some recognition to the forthcoming elections, thereby permitting them to stand in for an act of self-determination.

It has become clear that such a proposal is unacceptable to Indonesia. The Portuguese government has interpreted this refusal as clear evidence that Indonesia is not prepared to discuss in substance the issue of sovereignty.

Since then Portugal has taken a harder line, reaffirming the right of East Timor's people to self-determination,

acknowledging with less ambiguity its own international responsibilities, and, more important still, indicating clearly to Indonesia that it will not settle for an agreement which concedes all the issues of principle behind fair words.

The relative toughness of Portugal's response casts doubt upon the future of the UN initiative. Both governments have now invested some of their national pride in the talks, by committing themselves publicly to positions in relation to East Timor which are incompatible with each other. During the UN Human Rights Session in Geneva, the possibility that talks would be broken off altogether was much discussed in the corridors. This appears not to have happened yet, but the new turn to events poses important questions for the Secretary General, who must ask himself whether his initiative can be realistically sustained --- but who will also acknowledge that both Portugal and Indonesia are now, in effect, confronting the real issues. If talks proceed, and go anywhere, they will certainly address the substance of international dispute which East Timor represents: in this sense, they may contain the seed of a real settlement. But the diplomatic risks have become infinitely greater.

Source of previous articles: "TimorLink".

Desecration of Catholic shrines

The hands were broken off a statue of Mary in the church in Comoro, apparently by a member of Hansip (Civil Defence Force). It has been claimed he was paid to do this by members of military intelligence, though the individual concerned asserted he was a 'communist'.

More recently, on February 24, the statue of Mary in the Catholic school St. Joseph in Dili was destroyed. Here again, it has been claimed that members of the Indonesian military intelligence were responsible for this attack, perhaps in an attempt to provoke dissension between Catholics and Timorese nationalists.

In protest against the attack, a permanent vigil at the site has been mounted since February 24 by groups of Catholics and members of the clergy.

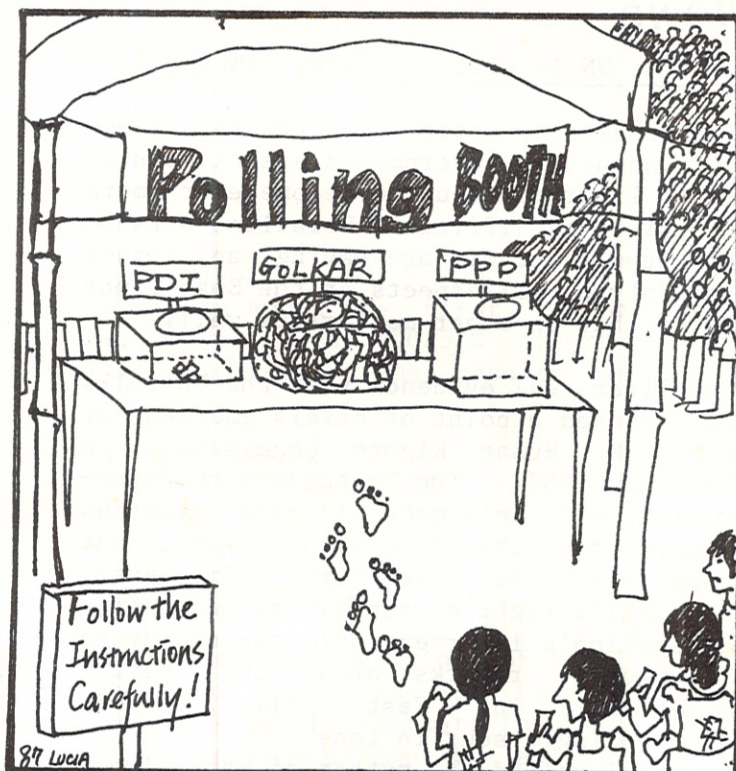
The Governor

This incident has not been the only cause of tension in Dili. Controversy also surrounds the future of the Governor, Mario Carrascalao. His term of office is due to end in September, and it is not known whether it will be renewed or whether he will be replaced.

The name of Jaime Oliveira, currently the administrator of Oecusse, has been put forward as a possible replacement. He is apparently interested in the job, and has the support of some top officers in the Indonesian military in East Timor, who are believed to dislike Mario Carrascalao.

Carrascalao is thought to retain the support of General Moerdani (the Indonesian Armed Forces Chief).

Mr. Oliveira was an official in the old Portuguese administration.



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