

EAST TIMOR : TO RESIST IS TO WIN

ROME TALKS - THE FUTURE OF EAST TIMOR IN THE POPE'S LAND

April 20, 1993, another round table on East Timor. The occupying forces, represented by the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Ali Alatas, continues to argue that the Timorese people have no more rights left! The Portuguese government, the administrative power, represented by Foreign Minister Durao Barroso continues to say that the Timorese people must exercise their right of self-determination! Both sides then return to their respective offices with the same sense of duty: they have done their job. At the end of this round table, both sides were sworn to secrecy so that a climate of trust can be built for future talks. The next round will be on the 17 of September 1993.

For the Timorese people, negotiations can mean survival of a people - an end to the process of genocide. For this reason, the Timorese will always look at "negotiations" as important steps, even though, these may not necessarily bring about an immediate solution.

The Indonesian generals continue to claim "inflexibility". This is, however, a sign of weakness and desperation. They know quite well that they are now under the microscope of the world. They can no longer hide their criminal side in the occupation of East Timor. They also know that no matter what game they play, they can never hide the fact that the Timorese reject integration. Hence, they have no choice but to show, at this stage at least, that they can not tolerate a solution for East Timor. The generals have used all their "bullets". They have no more arguments left to hide their criminal occupation of East Timor.

The generals of Indonesia have a total monopoly of the businesses and economic resources of East Timor, including oil, marbles, coffee, tourism and everything else. Even the port of Dili, the capital of East Timor, have become a tax free port. As far as the Indonesian generals are concerned, East Timor is the "promised land". So, why should they (easily) give it away? They have to be forced to do so. And, the determination of the Timorese people is the force that will make the generals give in. The current negotiations can be part of this process provided that these negotiations can be sustained for sometime. As far as the Timorese are concerned, to resist is, indeed, to win!



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FOR THE PEOPLE - XANANA IS STILL A HERO

This is an abridged version of an article published in NY Times in April 23, 1993 by PHILIP SHENON. A full version of this can be obtained from Mate Bian News.

DILI - The eyes and ears of the military are everywhere in East Timor, an isolated, impoverished piece of island that was invaded and annexed by Indonesia in the 1970's.

Eighteen years after Indonesian troops poured into the former Portuguese colony, many East Timorese say it remains a place of frightening repression. The surveillance extends even to the graveyard.

"Who are you? What do you want here?" demanded an unsmiling young man who wandered Santa Cruz cemetery in civilian clothes but whose short, blocking haircut gave him away as a soldier in the Indonesian army. "No photos, no photos," he warned.

Stepping carefully among a row of flower-draped headstones, another young man acknowledged reluctantly that he, too, was a soldier, on assignment in East Timor from his home on the central Indonesian island of Java, and that plainclothes troops now maintain a 24-hour vigil in the graveyard.

It was in the Santa Cruz cemetery, in November 1991, that Indonesian troops gunned down scores of demonstrators who had gathered to protest human rights conditions in East Timor.

"We don't want more trouble in the graveyard," the Indonesian soldier said. "We want to end the troubles in East Timor."

Whatever his hopes, and those of the Indonesian Government, many in East Timor wonder how the troubles of this frightened place will ever be ended.

The Government says that it has gained the upper hand over rebels who have resisted Indonesian rule since the occupation began in 1975. But international human rights groups charge that Indonesia continues to use torture and murder to enforce its annexation of East Timor, which makes up one half of the island of Timor in the southeastern end of the Indonesian archipelago.

"There is always fear, we lack the freedom to speak, to walk where we want, to have different opinions" - Bishop Belo

"There is always fear," said Carlos Ximenes Belo, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Dili, who is the spiritual leader of most of the 750,000 people of East Timor. "We lack the freedom to speak, to walk where we want, to have different opinions. If people talk, they know they will be interrogated. They will be tortured."

Bishop Belo is one of the few leaders in East Timor who still dares to speak out publicly about what many of his parishioners describe privately as brutal human rights abuses by the Indonesian military.

The abuses, they say, go far beyond the November 1991 killings, which drew international condemnation of Indonesia and led the United States and other nations to cut off millions of dollars in aid.



Victims of the Dili massacre

Witnesses said that as many as 200 people died in the graveyard massacre. The Government officially acknowledged that at least 50 had died, but scores of others are still missing.

The Indonesian Government jailed several of the soldiers who took part in the slaughter and insists now that the rights of the East Timorese are being fully

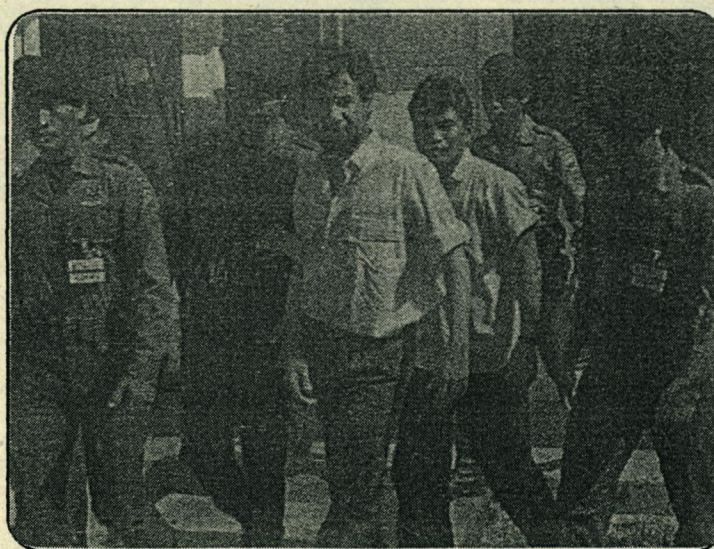
respected. "There is not a problem in East Timor," said the military's chief spokesman Brig. Gen. Syarwanhamid, who, like many Indonesians, has only one name. "The situation is very good."

"The soldiers here are not involved in human rights abuses," he said shaking his head. "There is no situation of the soldiers going too far and committing abuses. They are very well behaved."

In a report on human rights conditions in Indonesia issued after the Dili massacre, the State Department said the Indonesian military and other Government security forces were responsible "for numerous human rights abuses, including killings and torture of civilians" in East Timor and elsewhere."

A more recent human rights report said that there is a reduction in the number of civilian deaths caused by the security forces because of "tightened security" in the area and changes in military procedure.

***"We love Gusmao,
but it is too dangerous
to talk about him with
a foreigner."***



Xanana escorted by Indonesian military. AFP picture- New Straits Times

Since Government agents and informers are thought to be everywhere - in schools, in offices, even in churches - many East Timorese refuse to discuss politics with anyone outside their immediate families.

The unrelenting fear is evident when people are approached in the streets of Dili and asked their thoughts on the trial of Mr. Gusmao, which began in February.

Typically the response is a worried, almost panicked look followed by the

For more than a decade after the invasion, East Timor was the scene of a vicious civil war between the Indonesian Army and separatist guerrillas, a war that went mostly unreported in the outside world, although thousands died.

Now the Indonesian Government believes it finally has the guerrillas on the run, especially with the arrest last November of the rebel leader Jose Alexandre Gusmao. The Army has announced plans to scale back its presence on the island.

Diplomats say the Timorese separatist group, the Revolutionary Front for an Independent Timor, known as Fretilin, now has fewer than 200 rebel soldiers, down from several thousands in the 1980's.

The Indonesian Government is so confident of its control in East Timor that, for the first time since the 1991 massacre, it has begun issuing travel permits routinely to foreign reporters seeking to visit the province. They are kept under strict surveillance, however, and are often followed as they travel by car. Most East Timorese avoid answering their questions.

demurral, "I don't really know" or "I don't want to talk about it."

Looking over his shoulder to make sure no one else would hear him, a high-school student whispered, "We love Gusmao, but it is too dangerous to talk about him with a foreigner." The teenager walked away hurriedly.

East Timor is a tormented bit of paradise, with tall lush mountains that tumble down to idyllic white-sand beaches and the warm, azure sea. Because tourists will not come to such a troubled place, only pigs and goats wander the palm-fringed beaches.

The peaceful streets of Dili, the provincial capital, are lined with Mediterranean-style colonial villas, a legacy of three centuries of Portuguese rule, and Catholic churches. While the 180 million people of Indonesia are mostly Muslim, the East Timorese are 90 percent Catholic - Dominican friars brought Catholicism in the 12th century to what had been animist farming tribes - and the religious differences are one more reason for the strife here. Most East Timorese speak Tetun, the language of the province's largest ethnic

group, although Portuguese is still widely understood.

Just after sunrise, before the tropical heat becomes unbearable, the city's side-streets fill with fishmongers haggling over the morning's catch.

It is telling that of the city's small parks, one is always deserted; it is the site of a large monument commemorating East Timor's integration into Indonesia.

While East Timor remains among the poorest provinces of Indonesia - the per capita income is less than \$300 a year - the Indonesian Government has poured in hundreds of millions of dollars in development aid.

In a handsomely designed pamphlet distributed by the Indonesian Foreign Ministry last year to counter charges of human rights abuses, the Government said that East Timor received more of the national development budget per resident than any other province.

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But whatever its accomplishments in bringing educational programs and health care to East Timor, the Indonesian Government has failed to inspire any sort of political development. Instead it has created an air of menace and suspicion. Mr. Gusmao, the charismatic 46-year-old rebel leader, was captured last November as he slept in a house on the outskirts of Dili.

An envoy of the United Nations Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, visited Mr. Gusmao in the central prison in Dili in April and said the former rebel leader appeared to be "in good condition."

The envoy, Attorney General Amos Wako of Kenya, said he saw no evidence that Mr. Gusmao had been tortured or otherwise physically mistreated by his captors.

But asked in an interview whether threats against Mr. Gusmao's family may have led to his public declaration of a change of heart, Mr. Wako would not comment. "I had a very good talk with Gusmao, and I believe he answered all of my questions truthfully," Mr. Wako said. "That is all I can say." A verdict in Mr. Gusmao's trial on weapons and sedition charges is expected sometime in late May.

His lawyer said he believed the proceedings had

convicted and receives a harsh prison sentence. Government prosecutors are reported to have ruled out the death penalty.

The defense lawyer, Sudjono, said the former separatist leader "is still a hero" to many in East Timor. Because of the trial, he said, "there is high tension now - the people of Timor are waiting for the decision. in this case."

RAFFLE TICKETS

"Timorese fisherman" - Raffle tickets for the oil painting is currently for sale at \$5 each. The prize will be drawn after the 22nd May 1993 in Melbourne. All the proceeds will go to an arts exhibition which will be held in Sydney, in September 1993. This art exhibition is a project developed by East Timor Relief Ass. Inc. A set of exhibition will be held in the near future.



Artist: Sebastiao da Silva