

	EAST TIMOR:	
	THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM	

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1 - A TREMENDOUS DEATH TOLL DURING THE OCCUPATION

When Interfet entered East Timor, the 20th of September 1999, and the last soldier of the occupying forces left the country, the 31th October 1999, East Timor was an almost completely destroyed and burned land.

Behind that, there were four centuries of a weak Portuguese presence, with a colonial character since the end of the nineteenth century, and twenty four years of occupation by the Indonesian army and dictatorship.

It is hard to know how many Timorese perished during the occupation.

Several authors mention a number of two hundred thousand dead, whilst others, taking into consideration the decline in the population registered in the first four years of the occupation, refer two hundred and fifty thousand dead in East Timor. Yet, they forget that the demographic statistics pointed out an increase in the population of 2,2% per year, at the beginning of the seventies.

Gabriel Defert was, in our opinion, the specialist who best studied the numerous statistical data available, on the one hand, from the Portuguese and Indonesian authorities and, on the other, from the Catholic Church. He concluded in his book *"Timor Est le Genocide Oublié"* (Defert, G, 1992 (1)) that, even admitting that the rate of natural growth was reduced to half during the first six years of occupation, 308.000 Timorese lost their lives between December 1975 and December 1981 due to the Indonesian occupation. This represents 44% of the population present in the territory before the invasion, which amounted to 696 000 inhabitants.

It must be noted that many of these dead simply *"disappeared"*, after their incarceration by the occupying forces, consequence of tortures which led to their death. In these cases, as happened in the Santa Cruz Massacre and in many other incidents, no reliable information on the fate of the *"disappeared"* was given to their families. Much less were they allowed to see or bury their dead.

Remarkably, Professor George Aditjondro, who was Indonesian lecturer at the University of Salatiga on the island of Java, based on Indonesian Army data, concluded, as did Gabriel Defert, that three hundred thousand Timorese had *"disappeared"* in the first years after the invasion.(CIIR/IPJET,1995 (2)).

Between 1983 and 1995, several tens of thousands of Timorese perished, which leads us to conclude that the total death toll could exceed 308.000. Not having other elements, this number will be used in the Table annexed. A research in course may change those values according to data that now, in peace, can be collected under better conditions.

Those figures are of the same order of magnitude of the Nazi Holocaust, perpetrated against the Jewish people between 1939 and 1945. According to Professor Cecil Roth (3), from the University of Bar-Ilan, in Israel, the five million Jews murdered during the Nazi era correspond to one third (33%) of the total Jewish population in the world.

Anyhow, with 150 000 killings or more than 300 000 killings, the death toll in East-Timor during Indonesian occupation was extremely high.

TABLE NR. 1 – HUMAN LOSSES AS CONSEQUENCE OF WARS (estimates)

Countries or People	Year	Number of people killed (estimates)	Population At the beginning of the conflict	Percentage of people dead directly or indirectly (estimates)
East Timor (Indonesian Occupation) (1) (2)	1975- 1995	150.000 to 308.000	696.000	21 to 44%
Jewish People (Nazism, 2nd World War) (3)	1939- 1945	5.250.000	15.750.000	33%
Cambodia (USA,1970-75 Khmers Rouge 75-79)	1970- 1979	2.000.000	7.000.000	28,5% (1) (1)=(2)+(3)
Angola (Civil War) (18)	1975- 1995	1.500.000	6.500.000	23%
North Korea (USA+South Korea+UN)	1950- 1953	1.500.000	8.000.000	19%
Poland (2nd World War) (16) (German occupation, Nazism) (17)	1939- 1945	6.000.000	33.000.000	18%
Cambodia (Khmers Rouge, 1975-79)	1975- 1979	1.200.000	7.000.000	17,1% (2)
Biafra (Secession) (Nigeria)	1967- 1970	1.500.000	10.000.000	15%
Soviet Union USSR (German invasion, Nazism) (16) (17)	1939- 1945	26.600.000	190.000.000	14%
East Timor (2nd WW) (Japanese Occupation)	1942- 1945	65.000	480.000	13,5%
Cambodia (USA, 1970-75)	1970- 1975	800.000	7.000.000	11,4% (3)
Yugoslavia (2nd WW) (Germany, Nazism) (16) (17)	1939- 1945	1.500.000	14.000.000	10,6%
Rwanda (Civil War between Hutu and Tutsi) (19)	1994	800.000	8.000.000	10% %
Germany (2nd WW) (Nazism + GB + Allies) (16) (17)	1939- 1945	6.000.000	75.000.000	8%
Mozambique (Civil War) (20)	1975- 1994	700.000	9.500.000	7,4%
Greece (2nd WW) (Germany, Nazism) (16) (17)	1939- 1945	460.000	6.570.000	7%
Afganistan (USSR occupation)	1979- 1984	1.000.000	16.000.000	6,3%

Vietnam (USA)	1960- 1975	2.000.000	40.000.000	5%
South Korea (North Korea + China)	1950- 1953	1.000.000	20.000.000	5%
Bosnia (Ex-Yugoslavia) (Serbs, Croatsians) (20)	1992- 1995	200.000	4.200.000	4,8%
Japan (2nd WW) (USA + Allies) (16) (17)	1941- 1945	2.630.000	58.500.000	4,5%
Netherlands (2nd WW) (Germany, Nazism) (16) (17)	1939- 1945	240.000	8.000.000	3%
Iran (Iraq)	1980- 1988	1.200.000	45.000.000	2,7%
Romania (Germany, Nazism) (16) (17)	1939- 1945	460.000	18.500.000	2,5%
China (Civil War)	1945- 1949	12.000.000	550.000.000	2,2%

Note: The Commission for Reception, Thruth and Reconciliation in East Timor refers a number of killings around 180.000. We think this is a conservative figure.

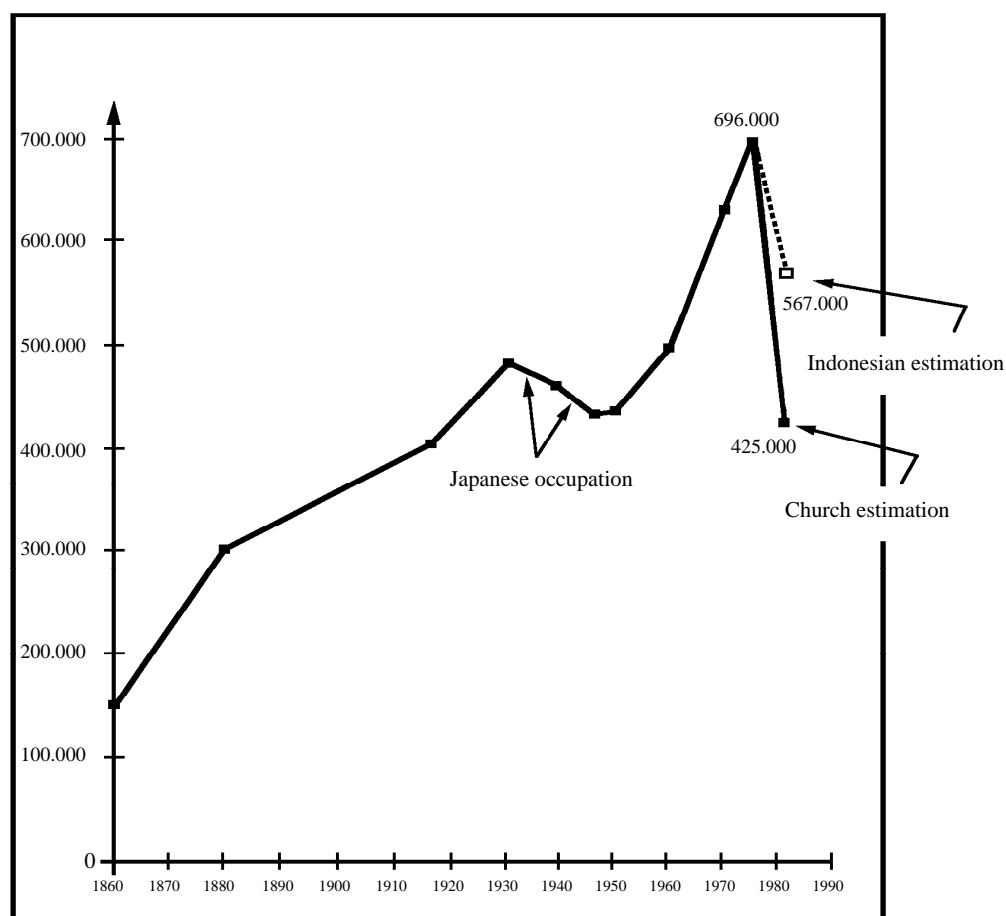


Fig. 1 - The impact of the Indonesian invasion and occupation on the population.

	1973 (Thousands)	1979 (Thousands)	Percentage of Reduction
Buffalo	141	24	83%
Horses	139	15	89%
Pigs	305	27	91%
Sheep and Goats	318	36	88%

Table 2 - According to numbers published by the Australian Parliament, the livestock suffered a dramatic reduction during the first years of occupation.

It is astounding how genocide of this dimension could take place and go unnoticed by the world public opinion. The included Table nr.1 allows us to compare it with other wars, be it in absolute terms or in relative terms, and gives us the dimension of a drama which, at the scale of East Timor, surpasses the percentage of dead in the wars of Vietnam, Biafra or Poland (the most martyred nation in the Second World War).

Next, we will try to analyse why it happened and, even more important, how the East Timorese got the complete shift of the situation.

2 - AN ANNEXATION IN A MOMENT OF PANIC MOTIVATED BY SOVIET EXPANSIONISM.

The international political situation, in 1975, was undoubtedly different from the one we have today. The World was then at the height of the "*Cold War*", disputed between two superpowers, the United States of America and the Soviet Union.

Moreover, in that same year, communism underwent an immense progression, in Africa (Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, etc.) and, most particularly, in Indochina. The fall of the pro-American regime of Lon Nol, in Cambodia, on 17 April 1975, with the correspondent rise to power of the Khmer Rouge; in the same month, the overthrow of the government in Laos by Pathet Lao's communists, with the extradition of American "*advisers*"; and, above all, the fall of Saigon into the hands of the Vietnamese communists on 30 April 1975: all these events left the West in panic.

The images of the hasty flight from the American Embassy in Saigon are the symbol of the Western defeat by the communist advance which, at the time, seemed impossible to stop.

In this geopolitical context, which world strategists analysed from the perspective of the "*Domino Theory*", according to which the fall of one piece would cause the following piece to fall, and so on, Indonesia appeared as one of the main, if not the only bolster capable of breaking this advance, in cascade, of international communism and, thus, to defend the "*Free World*".

Furthermore, American nuclear submarines, in order to escape being detected by the Soviet intelligence services, needed to use the deep waters of the straits to the North of East Timor, where Indonesia authorised their passage without they having to surface.

It is in this context that the support given by the American Government, and by other Western Governments, to the invasion and annexation of East Timor by the Indonesian

forces has to be analysed. Even if in East Timor there were hardly any communists, there was still the fear that a communist regime might become possible on the island. And a second Cuba - now in the Southeast Asia - could affect the regional stability and become dangerous for the geo-strategic interests of the West.

In fact the memory of October 1961, when Soviet Union built missile-launching sites in Cuban soil, putting the world at the brink of a nuclear war, was still very present. Very present was also the construction of the Berlin wall by occupying communist forces, also in 1961.

It is in this context that we may read the telegram dated of 21st July 1975, written in the sequence of a visit to East Timor by a eminent member of the British Foreign Office (Gordon Duggan):

"Without doubt, seen from here, it is in Britain's interest that Indonesia should absorb the territory as soon and as unobtrusively as possible; and that if it comes to the crunch and there is a row in the United Nations we should keep our heads down and avoid siding against the Indonesian Government".

Twenty years later, when Henry Kissinger presented his book "Diplomacy" in New York, at the beginning he tried to deny any role on the decision to invade. But at the end he admitted that the fall of Vietnam was the main reason for the support the American Government gave to the annexation.

It is worth to remind the debate that took place then, the 11th of July 1995.

In his speech of presentation of his book "Diplomacy" which he brought prepared, Kissinger did not say one single word on East Timor.

But Constâncio Pinto, former leader of the underground Timorese Resistance, incarcerated and tortured by the occupying forces and now living in the United States, asked the ex-Secretary of State a question about his visit to Jakarta with President Ford, just one day before the invasion took place.

"Timor was never discussed with us while we were in Indonesia", replied Kissinger who added, " At the airport, as we were leaving, the Indonesians told us that they were going to occupy the Portuguese colony of Timor. To us, this did not seem very significant, because the Indians had occupied the Portuguese colony of Goa ten years earlier and, to us, it seemed to be another process of decolonisation (...) so, when the Indonesians informed us, we neither said yes or no. We were, in fact, at the airport."

Also present in the room where Kissinger made his presentation was Allan Nairn, an American journalist who had been brutally beaten by Indonesian soldiers while other soldiers killed over two hundred Timorese demonstrators at the Santa Cruz Cemetery in Dili, in 1991. He addressed the ex-Secretary of State in the following terms:

"Mr. Kissinger, my name is Allan Nairn. I'm one of the Americans who survived the massacre in East Timor on the 12th of November in 1991. Now, you just said that in your meeting with Suharto on the afternoon of December 6th, 1975, you did not discuss Timor before being taken to the airport. Well, I have here the official State Department transcript of your and President Ford's conversation with General Suharto. It's clear from the portion of the text that was released that you did discuss the invasion, still pendent, of Timor with

Suharto. (In fact), President Ford told me himself that you and President Ford together gave US approval for the invasion of East Timor. Furthermore, there is another internal memo of meeting held on December 18, 1975 at the State Department immediately following your return from that visit, in which you severely reprimand your staff for having put in writing a finding by the Legal Advisor to the State Department, Mr. Li, according to which the Indonesian invasion of East Timor violated international law and also violated a treaty with the US, due to US weapons having been used in the invasion. It's clear from this transcript that you were angry at them, firstly, because you feared that this memo would leak and, secondly, because you were supporting the invasion and you did not want that it be known that you were acting against the advise of your own staff.

"If we consider the public actions, 16 hours after you left that meeting with Suharto, the Indonesians troops began parachuting over Dili, the capital of East Timor..."

Kissinger interrupted the journalist:

"Look, I think we all understand the point your making..."

But Allan Nairn continued:

"My question, Mr. Kissinger, is two-fold

"- Firstly will you give a waiver under the Confidentiality Act to authorise full declassification of the referred memo, so we can see exactly what you and President Ford said to Suharto?"

" – Secondly, would you support the convening of an international tribunal of war crimes under the supervision of United Nations on the subject of East Timor, and would you agree to abide by its verdict to your own conduct?"

To which Kissinger responded:

"I mean, uh, really this sort of comments is one of the reasons why foreign policy has become almost impossible to conduct in these conditions. Here is a fellow who's got one obsession, he's got one problem, he collects a set of documents without quite knowing what is written in them..."

"The facts took place essentially as I described them (Kissinger thumps the podium). Timor was not a significant problem for American policy and, for this reason, if Suharto brought the question up, and if Ford said anything that seemed encouraging, this was not a significant problem in American foreign policy. To us, it appeared to be an anti-colonial problem in which the Indonesians were taking over Timor and we had absolutely no reason to give it much attention at that time.

" Secondly, you have to understand that these events took place in exactly the same period as the fall of Vietnam. Nobody knew yet the effect the domino theory would have: Indonesia was a key country in Southeast Asia. We did not want to have any problems with Indonesia. And the reason I objected to the State Department putting this down in writing was that this would most certainly provoke public confrontation, and our fundamental stand on human rights was to try and discuss them first, peacefully, before they lead to public confrontation". (21)

3 - OIL AND OTHER ECONOMIC INTERESTS, AND EVEN RELIGIOUS FACTORS, ALSO INFLUENCED THE PROCESS.

As for Australia, with its mere fifteen million inhabitants, apart from wanting to maintain good relations with its super-populated neighbour, Indonesia, which had a population almost ten times greater, was also interested in the oil which was already known to exist in the Timor Sea. The demarcation of the territorial waters was already being discussed with the Portuguese Government, but Australia was not pleased with the results. Thus, the Australian Ambassador in Jakarta took care to remind his government, by a telegram dated 17 August 1975:

(...) "I wonder whether the (Australian) government is aware of the interest which the Ministry of Minerals and Energy has in the Timor situation. It seems to me that this department might well have an interest in filling the gap in the agreement on maritime borders, and this would be more easily negotiable with Indonesia, by closing the present, than with Portugal or independent Portuguese Timor". (4)

The Indonesian Christians of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Jakarta were General Suharto's principal advisers for the annexation. Seeing as the Catholics only represented 3% of Indonesia's population, where 87% are Muslims (6% are Protestants and 4% have other religions), the annexation of an island with a high percentage of Catholics could mean a reinforcement of the Christian minority. Apart from that, by contributing to the expansion of Indonesia, the Christian minority would prove their nationalism, thereby justifying the relative preponderance that it held in Suharto's regime.

This position of the eminent Indonesian Catholics - among whom was General Benny Murdani - was shared by a great number of Bishops and by the Vatican's Nuncio in Indonesia, to which the continuity and reinforcement of the small Catholic minority in the largest predominantly Muslim nation of the World, was of crucial importance. (5)

The Vatican itself was so interested in having good relations with the Indonesian Government that when, in 1989, more than one hundred Catholic Bishops from Europe, Africa and America subscribed letters addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in support of the proposition put forward by Bishop D. Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, to organise a Referendum in East Timor, these letters were retained under express orders by the Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Agostino Casarolli, and were never sent to the United Nations.

4 IN REALITY, EAST TIMOR WAS OCCUPIED BY MANY COUTRIES. INDONESIA WAS NOT MUCH MORE THAN AN EXECUTOR OF A POLICY WHICH INTERESTED THE WEST...

Being at that time the fifth most populated nation in the World, (with the extinction of the Soviet Union, it is now the 4th) and undergoing a process of rapid economic growth (approximately a 7% annual growth of the Gross National Product), Indonesia was a desired commercial partner by the industrialised countries, exporters of manufactured goods and importers of raw materials.

Suharto, who rose to power with the support of the West and Soviet compliance, after crushing more than half a million members and supporters of the Indonesian Communist

Party (pro-Chinese), knew that the International support was indispensable to develop the country economically. That is why he was so careful as to consult, in the first place, the governors of the most important nations.

It was only after visiting Japan (the main investor in Indonesia), Iran (important Muslim country), Yugoslavia (founder of the Non-Aligned Movement), Canada and the United States (7 July 1975), and assuring himself of their support for the annexation, that General Suharto started to affirm, in public, that the Independence of East Timor would not be accepted. The first time he said that, publicly, it was the 9th of July 1975 in the Jakarta airport, at his arrival from the USA. Only at this time (July 1975), did he give green light to the hawks of the regime to create instability in the territory and prepare the annexation by force. (6) (Magalhães 1992, a))

Taking into account the political and diplomatic support given to the Indonesian Government, the supply of planes and other war equipment particularly important in the combat against the Timorese Resistance and the covering up afforded to the crimes committed against the People of East Timor, it can be said that East Timor was invaded and occupied by the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, the Vatican, Japan and other powers, with Indonesia as intermediary. The soldiers were Indonesian but the interests and the support were mainly those of the Western powers. Only the fact of being "their war" can explain so much support, so much connivance, so much silence and so many lies, from the representatives of the Western governments (and also the relative silence of the Soviet Union and its satellites), as we will see next. After all, the Indonesian Government itself was not much more than the peon that, in the geopolitical chess of the World, the western powers played against international communism and in the defence of their interests, either global or specific to each state involved.

5- PORTUGAL INITIATED A PROCESS OF DECOLONISATION, BUT INDONESIA SUCCEEDED IN INTERRUPTING IT.

The weariness of more than a dozen years of war in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, and the victories achieved by the respective Liberation Movements, made impossible the development of a progressive pedagogy, which would permit a genuine decolonisation, leading to referendatory consultation of the peoples of the referred colonies.

Exceptionally, the absence of an armed resistance in East Timor, led the interested parties to think that an effective decolonisation could be achieved, with self-determination implemented through the direct consultation of the population, after a preparatory period of some years.

The founding of Timorese political associations, immediately after the Portuguese Revolution of 25th April 1974, and their auscultation by the local Government, was a step in that direction. The holding of a first democratic experience, with the election of regional administrative bodies in the county of Lautem through secret and universal vote by the adult population of the area, was another important step. Western journalists and diplomats followed the process and could verify its legitimacy as well as the massive participation of the local people, including women.

The experience was already spreading to the remaining twelve counties of Portuguese Timor, and would be achieved by the end of September 1975. This if the Indonesian intervention had not caused political instability in the night of 10 to 11 August

1975, a few hours after the newly elected administration took office (in this election, the candidates of the party pro-integration in Indonesia suffered a heavy defeat).

Also in the area of education, a project to restructure the system began just being implemented. It was approved by the three main political parties (UDT, FRETILIN and APODETI) and counted with the support of the excellent Salesian School of Fatumaca (near Baucau). This project, which had caused great interest among almost all Timorese teachers, was also obstructed by the same factors of instability, which, in August 1975, forced the Administrative Reform to be suspended. The first course to prepare the Timorese teachers for the new programs and pedagogy would start on the 11th of August, if the coup did not take place some nine hours before...

In January 1975 a coalition was established between UDT and FRETILIN. This coalition, which Governor Lemos Pires considered a factor of moderation and stability, extremely important to the success of the decolonisation process, was broken in May of the same year due to Indonesian instigation and determinant interference.

In fact it was broken when Francisco Lopes da Cruz and other UDT leaders came back to East Timor after a visit to Indonesia, where members of the Indonesian intelligence services made their minds.

The Macao Agreement, between Portuguese and Timorese representatives, and the subsequent approval of the law 7/75 of 17th July 1975, establishing the setting up of a Transitory Government headed by a High Commissioner, to be followed, in October of 1976, by elections of an Assembly which would then decide the future of East Timor was also useless. Indonesian army was decided to do everything it could to stop the decolonisation process and did not spare any means to create the necessary instability to interrupt and block the decolonisation in course, to prevent the holding of elections and prevent a genuine act of self-determination. And Suharto, hesitant for a long period, assured of the international understanding and support, finally agreed with the strategists of the CSIS, the Jakarta based Centre of Strategic and International Studies, and gave the green light to the invasion.

6 - THE RELATIVE ABANDONMENT OF PORTUGAL, IN COMPARISON WITH THE BETRAYAL OF SPAIN IN RELATION TO WESTERN SAHARA

Practically with no support - apart from the ex-Portuguese colonies that had just become the African Countries of Portuguese Official Language (PALOP) - and subject to strong pressure from its main allies, such as the United States and the United Kingdom and the (other) members of the European Economic Community (of which Portugal wanted to become part), Portugal was almost forced to abdicate from its responsibilities towards East Timor.

During many years, and particularly until it entered the European Community (on 1st January 1986), Portugal hardly did anything about East Timor. Yet the few initiatives it took, namely in cutting off diplomatic relations with Indonesia on the very day of the invasion (7th December 1975) and in presenting a complaint before the United Nations Security Council, allowed Portugal to maintain the status of Administrative Power of Portuguese Timor in a far more active, credible and effective manner than Spain had in relation to Spanish Sahara

As a matter of fact, by signing the Madrid Tripartite Agreement with Morocco and Mauritania, Spain abandoned, in practice, Western Sahara to the Moroccan Administration. This agreement, signed on the 14th November 1975 by General Franco's non-democratic regime (at a time when Franco agonised in hospital), was clearly illegal, since an Administrative Power cannot transfer its obligations and powers to third States when and how it pleases. Yet, and in spite of being illegal, it affected Democratic Spain's capacity to recover the exercise of its functions as an Administrative Power. The play of economic and political interests of both Morocco and Spain contributed, in their turn, to making even more difficult Spain's assumption of its responsibilities and obligations, after the democratisation.

Even more than in the Portuguese case, the position of Spain towards its former African colony, shows how much national and international interests so often speak louder than the rights and obligations of States in their mutual relations and, most particularly, when they concern weaker, unprotected and dependent peoples. The responsibility for such occupations - and the weakness of the tutor administrations - was the result of the pressure exerted by stronger states, the very ones which, unpunished, blocked the UN when it suited them and apparently become so efficient when it served their discretionary purposes.

7 - WHEN CONFRONTED WITH ALL THE INTERESTS AND FORCES IN PLAY, THE ACTORS IN THE FIELD WERE LITTLE MORE THAN MERE FIGURANTS.

Even today, many are those who accuse Portugal, the decolonisers, the governor Lemos Pires, some Portuguese officers of the MFA, the Timorese parties or some of their leaders, of being responsible for what happened in East Timor.

Yet, when confronted with so many and diverse interests, in which the United States, the Vatican, Australia, Japan, United Kingdom and other Western powers were involved, there was not much that could have been done.

As we have seen above, the fall of Vietnam in communist hands, and the fear that an independent East Timor could become another Cuba, in the other side of the world, were the very decisive factors.

It should be noted that the first clear sign of support for the annexation of East Timor was given by the Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam when he met General Suharto in Wonosobo (Indonesia) from the 6th to 8th September 1974. This public position of Australian Government was preceded, in August 1974, by a statement by the then Portuguese Minister for Interterritorial Coordination published in "*Expresso*", where he compared East Timor to a transatlantic lost in the ocean, and regretting that, being very expensive for Portugal, it seemed that no one was interested on it.

In fact this was not the official standing of Portugal, who kept its commitment to decolonise all the ex-colonies, including "*Portuguese*" Timor. But this shows how many Portuguese politicians saw Timor at that time: - a very far territory, where to every year money was drained from Portugal. The lack of a strong liberation movement left them confused, at the beginning, on to whom transfer the ruling power.

Two months later this same Minister changed his mind, when he visited East Timor. But for some Timorese leaders the feeling of abandonment by the old power had already

become very disturbing, creating anxiety about the future. This anxiety has been very well exploited by the Indonesian military intelligence.

It is important to note that when Gough Whitlam met General Suharto, FRETILIN did not exist yet; the ASDT (*Associação Social Democrática Timorense* – still a moderate Timorese Social Democratic Association) was still a moderate political association. It was only after the Australian government's position became public that the ASDT was converted into the Revolutionary Front For Independent East Timor (FRETILIN - *Frente Revolucionária de Timor Leste Independente*). At the time, the Portuguese President was still General Spínola, who would only resign on the 28th September 1974. Apart from this, it was only on the 11th March 1975 that the Communist Party would assume a temporary leadership in Portuguese political life.

Curiously, when the invasion took place on the 7th December 1975, the newly born Portuguese democracy had already lost its left-wing characteristics, on the 25th November of that same year. However, this fact was also disregarded by the Indonesian government, moved as it was by international and geo-strategic interests, which by far surpassed Portugal and even Indonesia itself.

It is obvious that FRETILIN's left-wing swing and its radicalisation, on the one hand, and the temporary relevance of the Communist Party in Portugal, on the other, were skillfully used by Indonesia's propaganda. Even though FRETILIN did not have any connection what so ever with the Soviet Bloc, nor did it received any military support from China, the Antara news agency diligently went about adding, to the more "left-wing" declarations by some Timorese leaders, false information on the internal situation in Timor and on the international support that was supposedly being received by FRETILIN, namely from Vietnamese "advisors", which in fact there never was in East Timor.

This *mise en scène*, aided by the pretentiously revolutionary language of some Timorese and Portuguese political leaders, fostered the panic towards the Communist advance which then reigned in Western countries.

This panic, which the "hawks" of the Indonesian regime so shrewdly instilled in some Timorese politicians (and in some Portuguese who were still in East Timor), fostered by lies forged by Indonesia's intelligence services and complemented with promises, which the future would come to prove completely false, led to the *coup* on the night of the 10th to 11th August 1975 in Dili, by members of one of the Timorese parties, UDT, with the assault on the radio and on other means of communication. This *coup* led to an inexorable weakening in Portuguese authority and resulted in a short civil war between UDT and FRETILIN.

But, when confronted with the interests in play and the forces which supported the Indonesian regime, it was irrelevant that the *coup* of the 10th August (with which instability in Timor really started) was carried out by party A or B, or had as protagonists some political leaders or any others. Also of little relevance was the personality or the behaviour of the Portuguese agents in the field. Western interests and Soviet compliance (because the Indonesian Communist Party eliminated by Suharto's regime was pro-China) were, by far, the main factors.

In this context, the Indonesian response to the Decolonisation programme, approved after consultation of the Timorese political associations, was its total boycott, through the direct and indirect instigation to instability in the territory.

When, with only two parachutists platoons (around seventy non-Timorese operational soldiers), Governor Lemos Pires withdrew to Ataúro, after Indonesian interference had provoked the *coup* of 10th August and instigated the civil war which followed, the only options open to him was to either fall into the power of one of the Timorese political factions in conflict (as happened to twenty-three Portuguese soldiers who were held as hostages by the Indonesians for almost a year) or to accept the "*protection*" of Indonesia. In fact, shortly before leaving the island of Timor, the Governor received a message saying that the Indonesian destroyer Mon Ictidi was on its way to Dili to offer him "*protection*"...

Considering that Indonesia had the support of the most powerful countries in the world, allowing that it carry out unimpeded acts aimed to generate instability in the territory, with annexation always in view, and that they denied any support to the only process of decolonisation that foresaw an effective democratic consultation of the people of this non-autonomous territory under Portuguese administration, an obvious conclusion is that there was very little either the Governor or the politicians, Portuguese and Timorese, could really do. In the great marionette theatre of the world geo-politics, the destiny of East Timor was plotted and the actors in the field were little more than casting extras.

The errors committed by the Portuguese and Timorese politicians led to an interchange of accusations and to a scenario of allegations and recriminations, which would come to inhibit any reaction the Portuguese could have had in relation to the injustices being committed. Manifest in these situations is the cynicism typical of great powers and totalitarian regimes, which, through well-mounted propaganda, not only commit the crimes but also convince their victims that they are the guilty party... In this way did the Portuguese Fascist regime proceed every time there were demonstrations, invariably ending in the excessive use of force, for which the "*irresponsible masses*" and the opposition agitators were blamed, when in fact all the excesses committed were provoked by the very police forces of the regime ... In like manner proceeded the Soviet propaganda, to convince not only the Russians but also many Czechoslovaks that the Prague Revolution (in the Spring of 1969) was a manoeuvre of dangerous opportunists and exploiters of the people and of immature and irresponsible politicians.

Similarly proceeded the Nazi propaganda by accusing the Polish army of attacking Germany on the dawn of 1st September, when in reality, the "*Polish troops*" were common German prisoners - to whom the Germany Authorities had promised to release if they collaborated in the farce - who, dressed in Polish Uniforms, under direct control of German SS special agents, simulated an attack on a German broadcasting station of a German radio in Gleitwitz, near the Polish border.

In retaliation to this "*treacherous attack*" Germany invaded Poland and so the Second World War began ... (22)

The forces, which plotted the trap into which both Timorese and Portuguese, almost inexorably, would end up falling, were far too powerful. Cold war and interests on oil were too strong. It was almost impossible to counteract them.

8 - IT WAS WITH LIES THAT INDONESIAN INTELLIGENCE INSTIGATED INSTABILITY IN THE TERRITORY AND PREPARED THE INVASION.

The Operasi Komodo with which Indonesian intelligence services fomented instability in East Timor and prepared the invasion, included in its programme the spreading of false and alarmist news on the situation in the territory - divulged by the Antara News Agency - in order to create, both in and out of Indonesia, the necessary climax for an anti-Communist crusade. It also included the practice of deceptive seduction, enticing Timorese political leaders with false promises and inaccurate information. Shortly afterwards, the programme also included the preparation of a military intervention, which had to be disguised as a request subscribed by the Portuguese authorities or, failing this, by Timorese political parties or leaders.

With this objective, the Indonesian Government offered "*protection*" to the Portuguese Governor, who, as referred earlier, refused, and sought refuge on the island of Atauro, easier to defend with the short means at his disposition. Having failed this attempt, when a representative of the Portuguese Government visited Jakarta, the Indonesian Authorities presented him with a text, which was, in essence, a request for support to be formulated by Portugal, which would give Indonesia total legitimacy to launch a military intervention in East Timor, under the guise that the restoration of calm to the territory was the ultimate aim. The above-mentioned Portuguese envoy refused to sign it.

The Timorese leaders, who sought protection on the Indonesian side of the border, after the short civil war won by FRETILIN, were forced to sign a request for integration. This request was later reformulated and designated the "*Balibo Declaration*" and signed in Bali (not in East Timor), under death threats made by the Indonesian forces, as some of the subscribers and witnesses would later denounce in the United Nations.

And, in order to prepare the way for the Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister to lie to the World and to his Portuguese homologue, whom he met in Rome, from 1st to 3rd November 1975, promising that Indonesia would not intervene in the decolonisation process, nor pressure the Timorese people, the foreign journalists who had filmed, fifteen days earlier, the attack by the Indonesian Armed Forces in the area of Balibo - Maliana, on the Portuguese side of the border, were assassinated.

9 - ALL THE JOURNALISTS WHO STAYED IN THE TERRITORY HAVE BEEN MURDERED AND THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE WESTERN POWERS SILENCED THESE KILLINGS...

Had world public opinion been aware of what was really happening in the territory, it would have been impossible to silence the East Timor issue in the United Nations. The Governments of the democratic countries would have had to face the criticism of the public opinion and would have had great difficulty in supporting Indonesia's policy of annexation, which was, in fact, theirs as well.

For this reason, they accepted, without any form of formal protest, that five journalists, two Australian, two British and one New Zealander were murdered in Balibo by the regular forces of the Indonesian Army, on the 16th October 1975.

The newsmen were recording the attack from the porch of a house, on whose external wall they had previously drawn the Australian flag as a precaution.

However, their cameras and the flag were of no avail to them. It was precisely because they were identified as journalists that they were eliminated in cold blood.

In order to justify their deaths, the Indonesian soldiers dressed the bodies in Portuguese military uniforms and set up scenery with the journalists placed near machine guns. But the photos must have turned out unconvincing because they were never used internationally.

The images the five international journalists have recorded before being killed would have dismantled the Indonesian propaganda, which sought at all costs to present the conflict as a civil war between Timorese factions.

Perhaps those images, if seen in Australia and other countries, would have made some governments withdraw the support they were giving to Indonesia. Those images may have even been sufficient to prevent the holocaust, which was to follow.

Days before (on 14th October), the American CIA informed the American administration that, *"Indonesian Units are going to attack the town of Maliana. The troops participating in the operation will wear uniforms without insignias and are to carry older, Soviet-made weapons so as not to be identified as Indonesian regular troops"*. (7)

On the very day of the murder, through the interception of radio-communications between different Indonesian military divisions, the Australian, British and American intelligence services would very likely have had knowledge that the journalists had been expressly murdered by the Indonesian soldiers precisely due to the fact that they were journalists and that they were recording the attack. In fact, a war-ship, a helicopter and Indonesian heavy artillery participated in this attack. This proof of Indonesia's involvement had to be occulted. These governments, even with this knowledge in their possession, chose to give credibility to the Indonesian version which sustained that the journalists were killed by accident during the cross-fire between the different Timorese factions...

The Australian Ambassador in Jakarta, Woolcott, was quite clear on this point in a telegram sent to his Government some days later:

"Although we know it is not true, the formal position of the Indonesian government is still that no military intervention is underway in East Timor. If the Minister (Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs) said or implied in public the Indonesian Government was lying, it would provoke a reaction of shock and bitterness". (8) (Cambera Times, May 1976)

And because the invasion of East Timor was also an Australian invasion, this is done in Australia's interest; the Canberra government respected the suggestion made by its Ambassador, and pretended to believe in the Indonesian version of the facts. Identical behaviour was followed by the British, American and New Zealander governments (among others).

On the 7th December, there was still one last foreign journalist in East Timor, the Australian Roger East. He was captured by the Indonesian forces when he was trying to send a desperate message to the World about the invasion he was witnessing, and he was shot on that same day. Once again there was no formal protest.

With the connivance of the Australian, British and other governments, a stone of silence was placed over East Timor.

During many years, the Portuguese-speaking African Countries (PALOP) were practically the only countries who endeavoured to denounce of the dramatic situation lived in the territory and who defended internationally the East Timorese People's right to self-determination.

10 - INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES AND THE RED CROSS ITSELF WERE ALSO PROHIBITED FROM ENTERING THE TERRITORY.

As if the murders of all the foreign journalists were not enough, the Indonesian occupation authorities, to avoid having any more witnesses, completely prohibited the entry of any International Humanitarian Agencies into East Timor during more than three years. Only on March 24th, 1979, was the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) conceded authorisation to enter in the territory. Although the authorisation was only granted for a few weeks and in spite of the various obstacles created to limit its action, the ICRC was still able to verify that tens of thousands of people, suffering extreme hunger and misery, had been "*dislocated*" and "*re-located*" in authentic concentration camps.

When, in April of 1979, the International Red Cross obtained permission to register, in Dili, those who wished to be repatriated to Portugal, the affluence was so great, that they had to cancel the initiative only two days after it started. The problem was that on those two days, seventeen thousand people had registered, wishing to escape from the living hell that East Timor had become!

The violence affected almost everyone, either directly or through the annihilation of hundreds of villages, the constant oppression and the disintegration of the social and cultural life.

According to statistics in 1979 released by the East Timor Regional Government, created by the occupiers, the number of livestock in East Timor had been reduced around to one tenth of the number existent before the invasion.

Almost all the farms were completely destroyed by the bombings carried out with planes provided by the United States of America (the famous Bronco OV-10F, produced by the Rockwell International Corporation) and with other military equipment supplied by several Western powers.

In October of 1980, the International Red Cross finally managed to obtain permission from the Indonesian government to remain in the territory.

In spite of this agreement, this international agency was expelled once again, during the great military operations of 1981, for which almost all the Timorese male population, from 15 to 55, was mobilised to serve as a shield for the Indonesian army in its fight against FRETILIN. It was only on the 20th December 1981 (six years after the invasion) that the ICRC was once more given permission to remain in the territory. (10) (11)

11 - THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT CAPTURED THE ONLY RETRANSMISSION RADIO THAT COMMUNICATED WITH THE TIMORESE RESISTANCE.

With no journalists in the field, without the “*inconvenient*” testimony of the International Red Cross and of other human rights agencies and organisations, with an almost total blockade of the borders for thirteen years and with strict censorship of the mail and of the rare and difficult telephone connections, East Timor was an authentic concentration camp for more than ten years.

With great effort and risk, the Resistance managed to maintain, during long periods of time, the Maubere Radio as the only, direct and almost daily, means of communication. From the bush near Darwin, Australia, some Timorese and Australians received news and appeals from Timor, and transmitted information on what was happening abroad. The Australian Government, so ineffectual in the disclosure of the murder of the journalists in East Timor, became highly efficient in the apprehension of Darwin’s retransmission radio. Once apprehended, on the 29th September 1976, news from the huge concentration camp, which was East Timor, ceased almost entirely.

The rare information that managed to be smuggled from Timor came via letters and reports from Catholic missionaries, occasionally through the few Timorese who, through bribery, managed to escape from the territory, or from the very rare visitors allowed by the Indonesian Government into the island for short “*guided tours*”. Curiously, when, at the end of 1984, the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mochtar Kusumaatdja, announced a decision authorizing the visit of some people, recommended by the diplomatic missions accredited to Jakarta, to the so called “*27th province of Indonesia*”, he explained that such authorizations could be granted “*provided the Indonesian Government consider the visit in Indonesia’s interests*”. (12) (Tapol n° 66 Nov. 1983)

It was only in November of 1988, thirteen years after the invasion, that General Suharto, the President of Indonesia, declared that eight of the thirteen East Timorese counties would be, from then on, open to free access by Indonesians and foreigners. However, restrictions were maintained, especially in relation to journalists and human rights organizations and, particularly, in periods of stronger repression, when such presence was obviously mostly needed.

During thirteen years, the information blackout imposed on East Timor by the occupying forces, with Australian help, was almost absolute.

12 - WITH NO INFORMATION IN THE MEDIA, THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE OCCUPYING POWERS WERE ABLE TO LIE FREELY.

As far as possible, a part of the press, not only Portuguese but also Australian, even American and from other countries, would transmit some news on what was going on in East Timor. Yet, the lack of images, the delay with which the information got out of the island, and the impossibility of carrying out complementary journalistic research, systematically prevented the reports from having any impact.

In the middle of the general silence, it was easy for the world political leaders of the governments, which supported, diplomatically and materially, the Indonesian occupation -

(and could, therefore, also be considered occupying powers through Indonesia) - to hide and twist the truth from their citizens and electorate.

We will present only some examples:

Example nr 1:

In February 1978, journalist Laurie Oakes stated that the Australian Defence Signals Division intercepted the radio messages relative to the murder of the five journalists in Balibo, which confirmed that it had been a deliberated action of the Indonesian Army.

Nevertheless, in reply to the requests for an inquiry into these killings, the Australian Government maintained that it did not have any knowledge either in relation to any form of Indonesian incursion near the border or in relation the circumstances involving the deaths of the journalists (Arnold Kohen and John Taylor, 1979, p.31). (13)

Curiously, a similarly convenient ignorance was assumed by the United Kingdom Government, when, on the 28th of October 1975, Lord Brockway inquired of the British Government, *"whether Her Majesty's government, when confronted with reports which state that the Indonesian armed forces had invaded Timor, had requested of the United Nations Security Council to consider this threat to peace and security and to take the necessary action"*, the Under-secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Commonwealth (Lord Garonwy-Roberts) replied that *"in the absence of any British representation in the area, Her Majesty's Government has no independent means of verifying the veracity of the reports referred by Your Lordship ..."*

And this position was upheld even when Lord Brockway insisted *"there has been evidence for a fortnight now that the Indonesian armed forces are in Timor and that Indonesian battle ships have stormed the territory"*. And added, questioning: *"Is it not a fact that yesterday the official news agency in Jakarta acknowledged that Indonesian forces were engaged six miles within the Timorese border and, if this is the case, surely it is a matter in which the United Nations Security Council should intervene?"*

It is worthy of note that, even without significant research and based only on sources in Jakarta, the London Guardian published the following article on the 13th November 1975:

"According to sources in the Indonesian capital, regular units of the Indonesian Army penetrated Portuguese Timor some weeks ago, and were responsible for practically all the armed conflicts which were presented to the World as a "counter-attack" by Timorese freedom fighters".

In spite of this, when, in 1976, the British Parliament brought up the problem of the deaths of the five journalists in Balibo, the then Secretary of State, David Ennals, stated that the journalists were probably been killed when *"the house in which they took refuge, together with FRETILIN forces, was hit by mortar fire from their enemies UDT and APODETI."*

Example nr 2

On the 30th March 1977, the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Adam Malik, admitted, in the presence of foreign journalists in Jakarta, that *"fifty thousand people or*

perhaps eighty thousand may have been killed during the war in Timor...It was war... What is the problem? ... After all, we all sin". (13)

This number contrasted tremendously with the number of two to three thousand dead generally referred by members of the American Administration, who admitted at the time that the number could total ten thousand at the most.

Confronted with this contradiction, the correspondent of the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) in Washington tried to obtain a comment from the US State Department. He had to wait for more than 24 hours, until he was finally informed that they had not been able to confirm that the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs had made such statement in Jakarta. *"But, if it is true that Malik said so, he is wrong".*

Example nr 3

On the 23rd March 1977, the former Australian Consul in Dili, James Dunn, gave his testimony of the Indonesian atrocities in East Timor before the United States Congress, to which he submitted a report based on interviews with East Timorese refugees that he had previously carried out in Lisbon.

In reaction to his testimony, the spokes-person for the American Department of State, although confessing that the Department had never tried to interview any Timorese, proclaimed that the reports on the atrocities committed by the Indonesians had been "grossly exaggerated". And concluded that *"it was of no use"* to doubt the Indonesian statements on East Timor (according to which the situation was almost normal).

Example nr 4

In answer to questions put by the editor of a British newspaper, Mr. Paul M. Cleveland, Acting Director of the Office of Regional Affairs, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, stated in a letter dated 5th January 1979:

(...) " The United States Government has accompanied the situation in East Timor with great concern. The recent history of the territory has included a hasty Portuguese withdrawal, fratricidal warfare, and an armed intervention by Indonesia. However, considering that the incorporation of East Timor in Indonesian is now a consummated fact, it is our view - shared by many other governments - that efforts should be directed toward ensuring that the people of East Timor receive humanitarian and economic aid from the Indonesian Government, international organisations, and other sources, in order to overcome the dire poverty in which most of them live" .

"We are sure that the position of the US Government on East Timor is clearly understood by the government of Indonesia and we feel gratified by that Government's decision to grant greater access to international humanitarian organisations. (...) We are confident the Committee of the International Red Cross will also participate in these efforts.

"Recent visitors to East Timor, including our Ambassador, inform us that the Indonesian Government appears to be taking very seriously its role in promoting political stability and improving the living conditions of the people. Comprehensive efforts are underway to resettle the thousands of persons who have sought protection in the area controlled by the Indonesian Government. Other activities suggest that programmes of humanitarian and economic assistance now enjoy the highest priority in the Jakarta Government.

"In marked contrast to the efforts by the Government of Indonesia to ease (sic) the plight of the impoverished people of East Timor, I should point out that President Carter has termed the violation of human rights in Kampuchea (Cambodia) to be "the worst in the world". Consequently, we have no intention of establishing relations with, much less "support" the Cambodian Government." (14), (15)

Noam Chomsky, who quotes this letter at a conference in May of 1979, later published with the title - *"East Timor and the Western Democracies"* - comments the cynicism of the expressions used. (p.6):

"Massacres and brutal atrocities have been converted into "efforts to ease the plight of the impoverished people of East Timor"; the miserable remnants who flee the rubble of their devastated villages and their defoliated fields are described as "seeking protection in the areas controlled by the Indonesian Government", which manifests such notable concern for its impoverished charges -- impoverished by whom, is what the author does not say." (...)

And, Noam Chomsky continues, *"The reference to the International Red Cross perhaps deserves special mention. A year ago (i.e., in May of 1978), the representative of the US Government, the liberal, Vice-President Mondale, travelled through Asia to spread the gospel of human rights, consulting with such outstanding practitioners as Marcos and Suharto. While visiting Jakarta, he was so impressed with the magnificent performance of his host, in relation to human rights, that he telephoned Washington, on his personal initiative, to urge that Indonesia urgently be supplied with A-4 attack bombers, in recognition of their achievements in the domain of human rights -- in this way, giving a great contribution to improving human rights in East Timor. Apparently, there was one condition to comply with: Indonesia should permit that the International Red Cross operate in East Timor. Many months later, the State Department expressed its "hope" that Indonesia, in its zeal to ease the plight of the unfortunate people for whom it has taken responsibility, allow the International Red Cross to assist in its humanitarian efforts. Meanwhile, the US and its allies continue to supply arms to the Indonesians forces, in order to convince other impoverished people to seek Indonesian "protection", so that they too can benefit from the ministrations of the human rights crusaders in Jakarta, whose efforts so impress their counterparts in Washington."*

One year after this conference by Noam Chomsky, in May of 1980, journalist Brian Ads affirmed from Jakarta, *"Hunger and diseases are even more prevalent than in ruined Cambodia, but the people of East Timor still fights tenaciously for its life"* (Observer, 2.5.80). (Quoted by Noam Chomsky, (15))

In May of 1982, the American journalist Rod Nordland was given permission, exceptionally, by the Indonesian authorities to remain eleven days in East Timor. His report, published on the 28th of May 1982 in *"The Philadelphia Inquirer"*, is a clear denouncement of the official American and Indonesian versions on the situation, and also contradicts the description presented in Mr. M. Cleveland's letter of 5th January 1979 that we referred previously.

According to Nordland, *"East Timor, the former Portuguese Colony which was annexed by Indonesia by force in 1976, is a land where generalized sub-nutrition and hunger is rife (...) There are thousands of political prisoners (...) While many of the Timorese interviewed showed a clear fear of talking, still some of them did so, and namely one who said:*

«Please, tell the World to help the Timorese people»

"At least six of the interviewed, according to information we received, were later conducted to the general headquarters of the Secret Military Services and were interrogated for hours in relation to what they had said during our interviews. (...).

"Virtually, no civil rights exist in East Timor. The Indonesians tell the farmers to whom they must sell their coffee and at what price. No one can leave their villages or their place of residence without permission. Telephone calls or telegrams out of Timor are forbidden. No one can leave their province without special permission, which is rarely granted." (...) (Re-translated from the Portuguese version)

Rod Nordland, an eminent American journalist who had just received the Pulitzer Prize before going to Timor, received the Polk Prize for this report, which constituted one of the first independent descriptions published in the American press after the invasion.

13 - EAST TIMOR, NO ONE EVEN KNOWS WHERE IT IS ... EAST TIMOR DOES NOT SELL ... EAST TIMOR IS NOT NEWS...

Rod Nordland's article, which we referred, is an exception. The information blackout imposed by the occupying forces had as a consequence the almost complete absence of information in the world media, during many years.

American professor Noam Chomsky, describes how (op cit. p.7) when the France-Presse agency was invited to a press conference in the United Nations, destined to discuss the situation in East Timor, it declined the invitation on the grounds that people in Paris were not interested in East Timor.

And Chomsky clarifies:

"An indication of this lack of interest was provided only a few weeks earlier, when the French Foreign Minister visited Jakarta. In an interview published in Le Monde, he described the achievement of his visit: new arms sales to Indonesia, plans for co-production of armament, etc. Asked about France's attitude towards Indonesian exploits in Timor, the Foreign Minister brushed the issue aside, merely commenting that France would do nothing to embarrass its Indonesian friends, who afforded such excellent economic opportunities."

In another essay, written in 1982 ("The United States and East Timor", Ed. Madragora, published in January 1986), Chomsky recalls what happened between him and the Columbia Journalism Review:

"In February of 1979, a leading American review of journalism, which prides itself on its critical analysis of the shortcomings of the press, asked me to submit an article on news coverage of postwar Indochina. I suggested instead an article on Timor, urging that the importance was far greater, for the obvious reasons that I have already mentioned. After some negotiation, they finally refused, on the following grounds: since virtually no one had heard of Timor, there would be no interest in such an article. So the circle is complete. First, the "free press" suppresses vital information, in service of the State; and then, no discussion of this suppression can take place because it has been so effective that no one has heard of the topic." (14)

In Indonesia, the control Suharto's dictatorship had over the press made the occupation look like fraternal solidarity towards a neighbour in trouble. A strategy typical of totalitarian regimes.

However, also in the so-called free and democratic countries, where freedom of the press is instituted, silence and lies were the motto of their governments and their representatives. Their involvement in the occupation was such that they accepted covering up the murder of six journalists, who were citizens of Australia, Great Britain and New Zealand, without one formal protest from their respective governments.

On the American side, not only was the real situation in East Timor concealed from public opinion, but also the illegal use of American armament in the invasion and occupation. The invasion, on the 7th of December 1975, began only a few hours after President Gerald Ford and his State Secretary, Henry Kissinger, had participated in a conference in Jakarta with General Suharto. This was not a mere coincidence. We may note also that, between 1974 and 1975, the United States increased its arms supply to Indonesia by 450%. It was due to the Rockwell Bronco OV-10 airplanes supplied by the Americans that the Indonesian military were able to carry out very “*successful*” air raids in East Timor.

In the United Nations, the role of the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and other countries was to minimise and silence the question, bulldozing in this way the principles of international law, which would later be invoked to justify the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi occupation.

A few years after the invasion, the American Ambassador to the United Nations stated in public that the main incumbency assigned him by the USA Government was to make sure that the United Nations be ineffective in its handling of the East Timor problem, and he boasted of having accomplished his mission with remarkable success....

This can be read in the Memoirs of Daniel Patrick Moynihan who was the US Ambassador to the United Nations during the critical years of the seventies:

"...China altogether backed Fretilin in Timor and lost. In Spanish Sahara, Russia just as completely backed Algeria, and its front, known as Polisario, and lost. In both instances the United States wished things to turn out as they did, and worked to bring this about. The Department of State desired that the United Nations prove utterly ineffective in whatever measures it undertook. The task was given to me, and I carried to forward with no inconsiderable success" ... (D. Moynihan, A dangerous Place, 1978 p.247)

14 - THE PERSPICACITY OF THE EAST TIMORESE LEADERSHIP HAS COMPLETELY SHIFTED THE TREND.

As we said before, the struggle between the two big powers of the post Second World War, the USA and URSS (until 1989) was tremendous. It was the so-called “Cold War”. But for many millions who perished in this struggle and many more who suffered under dictatorships, in the East (“communist”) and the West (“democratic”) camps, the oppression and the war were very real and tremendous. And the fear dominated internationally.

It was necessary to understand those realities and how the world politics really works to find ways to change the trend and to force openings where by the East Timorese drama could get some visibility. This was crucial to start getting the international solidarity

indispensable to achieve peace, independence and freedom. This is what Xanana Gusmão and the Timorese leadership did with an extraordinary eagerness and sense of the reality.

First, in 1983, Xanana has appealed to the convergence of all nationalists in the struggle against occupation. In March 18, 1986, UDT and Fretilin leaders in Portugal signed an agreement of Nationalist Convergence.

The 7th of December 1987 Xanana proclaimed the “*neutrality of the Armed Forces of National Liberations of East Timor*” (until then the forces of Fretilin) in relation to the political parties.

In June 20th, 1988, the Renetil, the National Resistance of East Timorese Students, was created in Indonesia, directly under Xanana Gusmão.

In a letter of 31 December 1988 Xanana resigned from Fretilin to become a non-partisan Commander-in-Chief of truly National Armed Forces.

This evolution was crucial to unite the Timorese in a common struggle against occupation, to make disappear the fear of communist threat and to get the respect and the support of international community, crucial to achieve self-determination.

The 5th of October 1989, Commander Xanana clarified even more his standing and thinking.

“The FALINTIL (...) have taken on, in these last eleven years, their true role, that is of defending our homeland, without links to any political party whatsoever (...)

...The FALINTIL are not involved in politics, but they are committed to building a free and democratic nation, based on respect for freedoms of thought, association and expression, as well as complete respect for the Universal Rights of Man.

A multi-party system and a market economy will be the foundations of an independent East Timor (which the freedom fighters are building with their corpses). It will be a free and non-aligned state with the firm purpose of becoming a member of ASEAN, in order to contribute to regional stability.”

15 - THE DEFEAT OF THE SOVIET UNION IN AFGANISTAN, AND THE END OF COLD WAR RENDERED SUHARTO LESS IMPRESCINDIBLE

In April 14, 1988, an agreement to withdraw Soviet troops from Afganistan is signed. After ten years of military occupation the withdrawal began on the 15th of May 1998 and was complete on the 14th of February 1999.

The enormous power of the Kremlin started crumbling into dust.

The 1st of December 1988 the Soviet Constitution was changed, to allow opposition candidates to compete and be elected.

In May, 11, 1989, Soviet troops started the withdrawal from the German Democratic Republic.

In April, the 6th, 1989, “*Solidarity*” got an overwhelming victory in the first partially free elections in Poland.

Finally, the 9th of November 1989 The Berlin Wall crumbles. Built on August 1961, it symbolized the division of Germany and of the world in two enemy blocks. Its fall symbolizes the end of Cold War.

In this tide of democracy, the anti-communist dictators of the “*West*”, had to show openness towards democracy. And Suharto felt he had to open East Timor for a few journalists, tourists and even for the Pope.

When the Pope Jean Paul II visited East Timor, the 12th October 1989, Xanana Gusmão was not only the leader of the Falintil, but also the leader of a really nationalist Resistance, struggling not only for independence but, more importantly, for freedom and democratic values.

When, the 9th of November 1989 the Berlin Wall crumbled and following that Soviet Union starts imploding and the Cold War finished, Xanana had not to change one single word to his speech and strategy. His extraordinary perspicacity had already opened the ways where by international understanding, respect and solidarity could pass.

When the Santa Cruz Massacre took place, the 12th of November 1991, the awakening of the international conscience for the Timorese drama could develop without obstruction, because radicalism and Marxist references were out of the program of the East Timorese leader and of the Resistance spoke’s persons.

This fact, together with the very strong links that Timorese armed resistance had with the clandestine and the diplomatic front has been crucial for East Timorese independence.

The role that Ramos Horta and other Timorese leaders played abroad, in the Diplomatic Front have been as important as that played by the Armed Resistance itself. The first would not exist without the last. But the Armed Resistance would also not get a solution if there was not a diplomatic one. In fact, it was the 5th May 1999 New York Agreement that opened the way to the referendum of self determination.

One of the results of the extraordinary diplomatic work done by Ramos Horta was the award of the Nobel Prize for Bishop Ximenes Belo – for which Horta did work very effectively – and for himself, on the 11th October 1996.

The Nobel Peace Prize gave a new statute to the Timorese Resistance, and opened many doors to their representatives in governments, parliaments and influential politicians, in many counties, the USA included.

In line with the strategy of national unity defined by Xanana Gusmão since the beginning of his mandate, the National Convention of the Timorese Diaspora created, the 25th of April 1998, the National Council of the Timorese Resistance (Conselho Nacional de Resistência Timorense, CNRT). It was the first elected multiparty structure created by the Timorese, and it played a very important role in strengthening the unity of the East Timorese in their struggle for self-determination. Father Domingos Soares and the most important leaders of the Resistance abroad, as well as an important delegation that came from East Timor to Peniche, Portugal, for this meeting, played a crucial role.

When Suharto stepped down and his New Order fell, this unitarian structure was already created, being Xanana Gusmão, then in Cipinanga Jail, in Jakarta, its very clear and unanimous elected leader.

16 - SOME JOURNALISTS PREVENTED THE MASSACRE AT SANTA CRUZ FROM BECOMING ONE MORE IGNORED AND FORGOTTEN MASSACRE.

Despite the efficiency of the American diplomacy in silencing the case in the United Nations, several resolutions condemning the Indonesian occupation were approved, both by the United Nations General Assembly and by the Security Council.

The resolution approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 1982, points out the necessity of the establishment of talks between the parties under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General.

Following some years of inconclusive talks, the possibility of sending a Portuguese Parliamentary delegation to the territory was considered.

Taking into account the expectations created among the Timorese people by the announcement of such a visit, the Indonesian authorities decided to disrespect one of the agreed points in order to boycott the visit, some days before the date set for it to take place.

Meanwhile, however, many Timorese prepared, during months, large demonstrations, for which they had made posters asking for the self-determination of East Timor and for protection against the Indonesian occupation.

Several journalists had also already entered East Timor disguised as tourists in order to cover the events.

The news that the Portuguese Parliamentary delegation would not be going to Timor caused great consternation among the Timorese population.

But the Timorese youth willing to take advantage of the presence of foreign journalists decided to organise a demonstration in the cemetery of Santa Cruz, in Dili, where they went to pay homage to a young member of the clandestine resistance killed a few days before.

Shortly after they reached the cemetery of Santa Cruz, trucks loaded with Indonesian soldiers arrived. In a calm and disciplined manner, they lined up, with their weapons at the ready.

Two American journalists, Alan Nairn (*The New Yorker*) and Amy Goodman (of Radio) WBAI in New York) fearing the worst, stood between the crowd and the Indonesian soldiers, showing their cameras and tape recorders in the hope that the presence of foreign journalists might dissuade them from violence. They were wrong. Obeying orders from their commander, the soldiers began to fire upon the crowd. The two journalists, along with other journalists who were present, bear witness to the fact that there had been no violent attitudes from the demonstrators, who were totally unarmed. There was neither order to disperse nor any warning from the Indonesian soldiers. For some minutes, M16 machine guns, of American make (or produced with American license) sprayed the defenceless crowd. After reloading, firing began once again. Many Timorese fled, or hid behind the tombstones. Others had no time to do so and were wounded or killed. The American journalists were mistreated in a barbaric fashion. They were probably saved due to the fact that they shouted that they were Americans. Other journalists were arrested and beaten, and their films and manuscripts confiscated.

In accordance with elements collected during the following weeks, over two hundred and seventy Timorese were killed in Dili, on that day, the 12th November 1991. Some two hundred more have been killed in the following days.

The testimonies of the two American journalists, of British journalist Steve Cox (*The Independent*) and of Australian journalists Russel Anderson and Bob Muntz, and also of the Italian priest Stefani Renato, and especially the images that British journalist Max Stahl (*Yorkshire Television*) managed to smuggle out of the country, awakened the world from its apathy and were responsible for alerting many people to the alarming situation in East Timor. In Portugal, Australia and other countries, even in Indonesia many demonstrations and protests took place.

Thanks to the perspicacity and courage of many young Timorese and the sagacity of a few journalists, some images were smuggled abroad, and the Santa Cruz massacre did not pass unnoticed, as it had happened with many others. It was decisive to awaken a significant part of the world public opinion for the East Timorese drama.

17 - THE FALL OF SUHARTO OPENED THE WAY FOR SELF DETERMINATION

After the Santa Cruz massacre East Timor became a pebble in the shoe of the Indonesian diplomacy.

Berlin Wall had already fallen, two years before. The communist threat almost disappeared. Suharto rule was no more so important as in the height of the “*Cold War*”.

Indonesia still was a very populous country with a fast growing economy. But the corruption of some members of Suharto family and of friends of him became too heavy and disturbing.

With the pretext that the Korean constructor KIA would produce cars in Indonesia, in the future, the so-called Timorcar was imported by Tommy the youngest son of Suharto, without paying the taxes that the other competitors had to pay. This was against the international laws of trade, and a complain had been introduced in the World Trade Organisation.

In June and July 1996 the World most important business newspapers and reviews had articles suggesting Suharto to leave, opening the way to a more democratic regime and another candidate to the Presidency. Suharto did not accept the suggestion, and decided to stand on.

The Asian financial crises knocked the Indonesian door, since September 1997. A few weeks after his unanimous election, in May 1998 Suharto decided to resign, under the pressure of the economic crises, the protest of many students and the demands of the pro-democracy movement. He had lost the support from his old western allies.

The Vice-President, J. Habibie took his place and promised democracy. The press became free and democratic elections started being prepared.

Meanwhile, feeling that East Timor had become a burden in Indonesian international relations, on the 27th of January 1999 Habibie Government has publicly announced the possibility to release East Timor from Indonesia if the East Timorese did not accept a regional autonomy that Indonesia would offer them.

So, the way for free consultation of the east Timorese people under the auspicious of the United Nations, was opened.

An agreement on this has been achieved in New York the 5th May 1999, between Indonesia, Portugal and the United Nations. And it was in this context that a referendum took place in East Timor on the 30th of August 1999.

18 - THE DISCIPLINE AND COURAGE OF THE EAST TIMORESE RENDERED THE REFERENDUM AN ASTONISHING VICTORY

When Suharto regime fell down, the East Timorese had already created an elected Unitarian body, the CNRT (Conselho Nacional da Resistência Timorense), as we have already seen before.

This structure played a crucial role in the preparation of the referendum.

The conditions were very difficult.

In fact, the New York agreements of May 5, 1999, established that the security conditions for the referendum would be guaranteed by the Indonesian forces, TNI. The United Nations would have there only a civilian mission to supervise the referendum, the UNAMET (United Nations Mission in East Timor). This has been created on the 11th of June 1999, by the Resolution 1246 of the Security Council of the UN, and could have a maximum of 280 not armed CIVPOL (civilian police members).

Leaded by Ian Martin (UK), UNAMET registered more than four hundred thousand voters, in a extremely short period of time, from 16 July to 5 August 1999.

But the main difficulties were not the lack of time, logistics, or organisation.

For UNAMET and even more for the East Timorese, the real problem was the climate of fear created by the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) and the Timorese militias created, directed, armed and paid by the occupying forces.

Militias provoked Falintil every time. The aim of the Indonesian forces was to promote the struggle between the Timorese Armed Resistance (Falintil) and the "*Timorese*" militias to say, again, as in 1975, that the Timorese would kill each others if TNI abandoned the territory. This would be, once more, the justification to be given for the Indonesian military presence in East Timor.

Xanana Gusmão was very clear and decisive, when he ordered the Falintil and their commander no to respond to provocations. Under the command of Xanana Gusmão, Taurd Matan Ruak, the leader of the Falintil had to exert an exemplar control on their freedom fighters, to avoid responding clashes and the derailment of the process. The extreme wiseness of Xanana and the discipline of his men have been crucial for the success of the consultation.

Equally important was the political preparation of the people for the vote.

On the 30th of August 1999, 446 953 of the 451 792 voters have voted 98,93%. And from those, 344 580 (78,5%) voted against the autonomy statute, this means, for independence, and 94 388 (21,5%) in favour of autonomy within Indonesia.

To vote, many Timorese had to walk for hours, together with their children, from their refuges in the mountains where to they had fled, under the threat of the militias and TNI.

This was the result of the extraordinary courage and determination of the East Timorese people, and also of the wiseness and eagerness of his leadership.

Xanana, still in home arrest in Jakarta, could not play yet a direct role in the political campaigns. Under his leadership, several East Timorese leaders in the territory did an extraordinary political work without which it would be impossible to get the full mobilisation of the East Timorese people for the democratic consultation done in so harsh circumstances.

19 - THE BURNOUT OF EAST TIMOR AND THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

After the referendum, and knowing that the pro-integration campaign had lost, TNI leaded militias put East Timor on fire and forcibly deported 250 000 East Timorese to West Timor (Indonesia). 300 000 others fled to the mountains, while their houses were sacked and put on fire. The destruction was almost total, in a cadre of a scorched earth policy.

After some massacres done by the militias-TNI, namely in Dili and Suai, to escape to be killed or deported, many Timorese hid in the mountains and started starving.

Under the pressure of the International Community, the President Habibie of Indonesia accepted, finally, on the 12th September, international peace keeping forces to come to establish peace and security. The Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Anan, played, then, a crucial role. He pressed Indonesia to accept Interfet to enter East Timor. And he promoted the faster response the UN ever gave to creating a multinational force to establish peace an security and support a urgent humanitarian campaign.

The President of the United States of America, firstly very hesitant, took finally the decision to support the Kofi Anan proposals and pressed, himself too, the Indonesian President, to accept the entering of an international force in East Timor for peace enforcement.

As Bill Clinton would latter publicly confess, the insistent and anguishing demands by the Prime Minister António Guterres and the President of the Republic of Portugal, Jorge Sampaio, were determinant factors for his decision.

Once obtained the Indonesian agreement, that many governments considered a pre-condition (otherwise a battle could take place between Indonesian and international forces) the 15th September the UN Security Council approved its Resolution 1264. This, approved in the context of chapter VII (coercive measures) of the UN Charter, created a Multinational

Force empowered to use all the means needed to re-established peace and security in East Timor.

This multinational force, INTERFET (International Force in East Timor) with troops of several countries, would operate under a unified command given to Australia.

The 19th of September the Major General Peter Cosgrove, the commander of INTERFET, went to Dili to talk with the Indonesian Commander (Major Kiki Syahnakri) to prepare the landing of INTERFET forces. The following day (20th September 1999) the first peace enforcement forces landed in the airport of Dili. They were very well trained and equipped Australian forces. Forces of other 21 countries (including all the neighbouring countries of Indonesia) landed later.

Under the leadership of Major General Peter Cosgrove, INTERFET achieved its tasks in a very effective way, almost with no incidents. The 31st of October 1999 the last Indonesian soldiers left the territory in his way back home. East Timor was, finally, a free land. A few days before, the 20th of October, Indonesian Popular Assembly recognised the result of the UN leaded consultation and revoked the bill of integration of East Timor in Indonesia.

The 24th of October Xanana Gusmão – who had been detained on the 20th of November 1992 and later condemned to life imprisonment – came back to his mother land. He still had the opportunity to present his farewell to the TNI troops leaving.

Interfet created the conditions for UNTAET, the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor, approved by the UNSC (United Nations Security Council) the 25th of October. It had been charged with the global responsibility for administering East Timor during the transitional period, with legislative, executive and judicial powers. The goal was to prepare for independence.

With this objective a National Consultative Council has been created and, in July 2000 a Transitional Cabinet was formed with as many Timorese as UN members.

The 30th of August 2001, two years after the self determination referendum, a constitutional Assembly was elected. Sixteen parties presented to the people choice and twelve elected representatives to the new Parliament. Fretilin got 43 of the 75 national seats (57,37% of the votes) with 16 women elected, PD got 7 (8,72% of votes) none woman, PSD got 6 seats (8,18%) three of them women, and ASDT got also 6 seats (7,84% of the votes) one woman elected - The other parties got 2 or 1 seats. In this total of 75 parliamentarians, 22 are women (26%).91 % of the electors did vote.

The Constituent Assembly had also 13 more seats, one for each district. In total, it was this 88 member's parliament who wrote the first Constitution of the República Democrática de Timor-Leste, approved on the 22nd of Mars 2002, with a parliamentary regime.

According to this newly approved Constitution, the 14th of April 2002 Xanana Gusmão has been elected President, with 82,7% of the votes (the other 17,3 went to Francisco Xavier do Amaral, ex-President of Fretilin) for a period of five years.

The 20th of May 2002 East Timor was recognised, by the international community, as a new state.

20- THE FIRST STEPS OF THE NEW STATE: THE RECONCILIATION AMONG TIMORESE AND WITH INDONESIA

One of the main concerns of Xanana Gusmão and other Timorese leaders was the returning to their mother land of around 250 000 people deported to West Timor, and the reconciliation of the traumatised population.

For that Xanana Gusmão promoted several meetings with deported people, militia's members and their families, in the border.

With the same goal, a Reception Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação) was also created.

Although the traumas are very deep, after more than two decades of tortures, killings and terror, until now reconciliation process went on peacefully and very positively.

As an example illustrating the climate of tolerance and understanding created I'll remind what happened in Suai.

In the 6th of September 1999, two days after the announcement of the results of the referendum, around two hundred people including three priests who had sought sanctuary in the church in Suai, have been slaughtered by TNI backed militias.

Two years later the militia leader Helio Caetano Monis returned to Suai and faced a crowd of hundreds of villagers.

Helio Monis lived in West Timor, since then, and has returned to Suai to ask his relatives and neighbours to forgive the violence and to allow him and his comrades to return home.

He was not killed nor beaten. He apologised and accepted to be tried.

Despite all the deaths, the community wanted the militia leaders to return home, in order to allow the other inhabitants trapped in the West Timor camps to come back home too.

One of the results of this policy of welcome and reconciliation is the return to East Timor, until the end of 2002, of more than 200 000 (two hundred thousand) Timorese, who in 1999 were deported or escaped to Indonesia. And this regress, although including numerous members of militias, was almost without incidents.

When jailed in Indonesia, Xanana Gusmão learned Bahasa Indonesia and developed strong relationship with Indonesian prisoners. Slowly he started being known in Indonesia, and became an icon for many young Indonesians.

By this policy of reconciliation, also with the Indonesians, he has shown his extraordinary understanding of the human kind. More and more important Indonesian people started visiting him, as did Abdurachman Wahid, leader of Nadlatul Ulama, a socio-religious muslim organisation with more than 30 million adherents.

On the 20th of October Abdurrachman Wahid (usually known as Gus Dur) became the first democratic elected President of Indonesia. And just a few months after the “*Black September*” of East Timor, he visited Dili and, in Santa Cruz Cemetery, he apologised for the wrong doings in the past and in particular for the Santa Cruz Massacre.

The friendship among those two men, Xanana Gusmão and Gus Dur, the courage and humility of both of them, rendered possible a very fast reconciliation between the two people, Indonesian and East Timorese, overcoming the very deep wounds of occupation times.

The 20th of May 2002, when East Timor feasted its independence, among the very prominent people present were not only Kofi Anan, Bill Clinton (in representation of the President George W. Bush of the USA), the President of Portugal, the Prime Minister of Australia, but also the new President of Indonesia, Megawatti Sukarnoputri.

When Xanana Gusmão arrived with Megawatti to the podium and raised her arm, the multitude spread by the large Tassitolo plain, greeted very warmly the President of the new democratic Indonesia, the ex-occupying power. Doing so, the East Timorese have shown, once again, their wisdom. The future of East Timor depends, in large measure, from its relations with its closer neighbour, Indonesia. And the very warm welcome to Megawatti, was a friendly message for the whole of the Indonesian people, from their neighbour East Timorese.

The celebration of Independence was not only a very impressive and moving festivity. It was also an extraordinary diplomatic victory of the East Timorese and of their leadership.

But the new country had to be rebuilt from the ashes. The problems were overwhelming.

Timorese culture and society have been tremendously shaken, during occupation.

Families and clans (enlarged families) lost many of their members, have been forcibly displaced from the lands of their ancestors and mixed with people from other villages, having different languages and cultures.

The terror during occupation, and the need to cooperate with the occupier created divisions among members of the same family, forced to denounce or, sometimes to see or to participate in the tortures or killings of other members of the same family ... with all the trauma this provoked.

The Resistance has been an extraordinary school of courage, tenacity, devotion and dedication to the people but, in the meantime, the occupation has been a school of oppression, corruption and inefficiency. Both established their roots in East Timor.

In October 1999 the monetary economy almost did not function and there was extensive unemployment. Happily the subsistence agriculture and very small commerce started working again and rendered possible, to many Timorese, to feed themselves and survive those hard times.

21 - THE HARD CHOICE OF THE PORTUGUESE AND TETUM AS OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

One year after the self-determination referendum, the 30th of August 2000, a Constituent Assembly was elected in East Timor.

One year later, this Parliament with 88 members decided, by eighty votes in favour, three abstentions and no one vote against (five parliamentarians were absent) to choose Portuguese and Tetum as the two official languages of East Timor.

This was a sovereign decision of the Timorese People, taken by their representatives, democratically elect. This choice established the borders with the neighbouring countries, Indonesia and Australia. Being languages of the resistance and of the Church (that became an essential part of the resistance to the occupation, too), they are the sovereign choice of the East Timorese People.

Many foreigners, namely Australians, Indians, Japanese and others did not understand why the Timorese representatives took this decision. And some not only considered it was a wrong decision, but also tried to counteract and boycott it.

For the Timorese this has been and still is a very hard and difficult decision. Portuguese is a language that in 2001 only a small minority of the Timorese could speak. This is a complex language with many verbal forms, time, mode, person, that do not exist neither in Tetum nor in Bahasa Indonesia. Even in English the number of different verbal forms is smaller than in Portuguese.

Two years after the decision of the Timorese Parliament there still was and still do persist difficulties of communication between the Timorese.

No one of the two languages most spoken in East Timor is spoken by every Timorese.

Tetum is not spoken in the eastern regions of the country, nor in Oe-Cussi. And most of the diaspora who lived in Australia or in Portugal and returned to East Timor cannot speak Bahasa Indonesia.

In 2001 English and Portuguese languages were spoken only by small minorities.

In the schools, the linguistic difficulties are now still enormous. And in the public services, in health and justice systems, as in many other cases in daily life, it is complicate. Interpreters are often needed, and they are not always there...or they are not fully reliable, for lack of training and knowledge.

This is one of the most important problems of the transition period. Also because language, at a certain extent, shapes the way of thinking and the abstraction capacity. Scientific thinking, feelings expression and sociability are also conditioned by the knowledge and the mastery of the language used in communication.

When, in 1975, the author leaded a mixed Committee of Timorese and Portuguese, created by the Portuguese Government, Lemos Pires, for the restructuring of the Education System, this Committee did not take any decision on the language to be used. They

considered this was a political decision before being a technical problem. This had to be an expression of the sovereignty of the Timorese People.

At that time the Portuguese language was the only one used by the Government, in the public services, in education, etc. Only in the Church Tetum was used, quite often, in catechesis and in many religious ceremonies.

Although that, the Committee handed over the decision about the language or languages to be used in future education to the three main Timorese parties then existing: - UDT, FRETILIN and APODETI.

In 1975, as well as in 2001, all the three main parties have chosen Portuguese as the first language. For UDT and FRETILIN at that time the choice, as second language to be taught in schools, was English. For APODETI the choice went to Bahasa Indonesia, but only as second language.

22 - THE OIL AND GAS OF THE TIMOR SEA: A VERY IMPORTANT RESOURCE AND ALSO A DANGEROUS RISK

We have already seen how much the oil and gas resources of the Timor Sea played an important role in Australian decision to suggest and support Indonesian annexation of the territory. The Timor Gap “*Would be more easily negotiable with Indonesia, by closing the present, than with Portugal or independent Portuguese Timor*”, as wrote the Australian Ambassador in Jakarta, in August 17, 1975.

In March 25, 2002, the Australian Foreign Affairs Minister, Alexander Downer and the Attorney-General Daryl Williams, announced that Australia would exclude maritime boundaries from compulsory dispute settlement in both the International Court of Justice and in the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (King, 2003).

Prime Minister John Howard clarified the reason for that: “*That is a legitimate protection of a national interest*” (King, 2003, p1).

For Mari Alkatiri, the Prime Minister of East Timor, it was seen as “*a way to tighten our hands*” (King, 2003, p2).

According to Robert King and others, during negotiations, in Dili, the 27th of November 2002, the Minister Alexander Downer thumped the table, irritated with the Prime Minister Alkatiri insistence in the defence of the East Timorese rights.

According to the press and some reports in internet sites, during this meeting, the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs would have said (as a menace) to the Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri of East Timor: “*Let me give you a tutorial in politics – not a change*”.

Eight days later, the 4th of December 2002, the house of Mari Alkatiri was burned to ashes, by people apparently demonstrating against the violence of the police towards students a few days before.

In the minds of several Timorese the question rised: – would it be related to oil negotiations?

Up to now no proof has been found that one event was related to the other. Nor the opposite.

In a debate in the House of Representatives of Australia, that took place the 10th of March 2004, Ms Hoare asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs if he did “*tell the East Timorese leadership << we don’t have to exploit the resources. They can stay there for 20, 40, 50 years. We are very tough. We will not care if you give information to the media. Let me give a tutorial in politics – not a chance>>*”

The answer was “<< *It would be inappropriate to comment on the details of confidential bilateral discussions>>*”(From <http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/rep/dailys/dr100.304.pdf>, cited by “John M. Miller” fbp@igc.org. 10 Mar 2004.

Seeing how many states rich in natural resources become failed states as a consequence of the greed of other states or multinational companies, we ask how to avoid the same to happen in East Timor.

As in the past, it is necessary to scrutinize the reality beyond the appearances, menaces and risks behind nice words and lies, and denounce unfriendly behaviours and actions to prevent its harsh consequences.

East Timor is, still, a very fragile state, with a traumatised society.

The struggle for democracy and development is still far from being won. And much more has to be done, inside and outside East Timor to achieve the results for which so many Timorese struggled and died.

23 - THE CHALLENGE OF THE DEVELOPMENT

The law on oil and gas resources that the Government has prepared is a very important step for transparency and sustainability.

The construction of the state has been and still is being done systematically and consistently.

But the development goes on very slowly. Up to now (March 2004) there is a lack of initiative of the Timorese, and inefficiency in the civil service. And up to now there is not yet a mobilising project to promote the employment, and the development of the technical and organizational skills of the Timorese. A new dynamic is necessary.

As Xanana Gusmão said in 1999,

“all would understand that the Liberation of the Mother Land is only one half of the objective of the independence. Because, after the independence, the Liberation of the People is the other half of the objective of the independence”.

This is the challenge the East Timor People faces, now. The task can be achieved in peace and freedom, but this is also very hard and even more complex than the challenge of struggling for self-determination.

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