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TIMOR INFORMATION SERVICE

REPORT FROM EAST TIMOR

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AUS representative on Australian delegation to East Timor, March 12-20 1975

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The Appendices referred to in the text were tabled with the original report & are not republished here/ The author would appreciate oritioism, suggestions & corrections of fact/ Typing was done by Maree Beer, to whom thanks is due/ Also to Rod Quinn for advice & John Birch of CAA for allowing his brains to be picked, probably inadequately/

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Preamble

One does not need to smoke marijuana to get high in East Timor. The country is unspeakably beautiful: mountain ranges with mist clinging to them/ wild goats climbing on the flat rocks of the shoreline between Dili & Baucau/ water buffalo lolling in waterholes/ green expanses of paddy fields/ villages of traditional thatched huts frequented by the ubiquitous Timorese cur/ sweet strains of the traditional music, which combines stringed instruments of Portuguese origin with traditional brass gongs/ & ponies grazing in settings evocative of Gauguin's Tahiti leave one with sensations of natural beauty which are difficult to erase.

I found the people gentle, receptive and frank to deal with, — there is little evidence of the corruption of human values which has occurred in our society.

The thought of the hideous arsenal of twentieth century weaponry being used to scarify that countryside & maim Timorese people is hard to reconcile. Vietnam, of course, probably looked as beautiful as East Timor ten years ago; in this instance the Indonesian-employed weaponry would be of Australian, not American, origin.

The Australian delegation of which I was a member consisted of Keith Wilson, secretary of the Newcastle Trades Hall Council, Bill Williams of Aboriginal Legal Aid in Adelaide, Jim Roulston of the Victorian Branch of the AMWU, John Birch of Community Aid Abroad, Tim Rowse, part-time Sociology tutor at Flinders University & myself representing AUS. We were present in East Timor as the guests of FRETILIN, the Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor.

We arrived in Dili by light aircraft from Darwin at about 5.30 pm on Wednesday March 11. At the airport we were met by a massive pro-independence, pro-FRETILIN demonstration. Australian journalist Bruce Stannard (who had written on the day of our arrival that the timing of our visit could scarcely be worse & that the Indonesians were aware that it had been organised by a Communist journalist) saw fit to estimate the crowd at 3,000 in the dispatch to his newspaper. It was, in the delegation's opinion, closer to 50,000. Two members of our delegation had been organisationally involved with the Melbourne Moratorium demonstrations of 75-100,000 & considered the crowd to be comparable. The main slogans chanted were 'Viva FRETILIN!' 'Independence or Death' & 'Portugal out, Indonesia out!'

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This demonstration was to set the pattern for the rest of our visit, a pattern which showed that FRETILIN enjoys massive popular support.

In the week which followed, the delegation was received by the Acting Governor of East Timor, had intensive discussions with the Central Committees of FRETILIN & the U.D.T., interviewed the mayor of Dili (who is also on the Central Committee of the U.D.T.) visited Baucau, East Timor's second city & Suai in the South-eastern lowlands, spent a two-day trip visiting various mountain villages, visited Oe-Cusse — an enclave in the Indonesian side of the island — visited schools & a hospital & interviewed the Indonesian Consul in Dili. The FRETILIN - U.D.T. - organised itinerary is included in this report as Appendix A.

One of the extreme limitations of this report should be recognised from the outset: that is, the fact that a week's visit is not sufficient to gain a coherent picture. My view of the education system, for example, is incomplete. Neither am I able to have a full historical view of the situation, not having seen E. Timor before March 1975. The fact that we were the guests of FRETILIN-U.D.T., did, however, artificially provide an intensive view of East Timor which it would normally be impossible to gain in a week. Although some would claim that this fact would tend to produce a 'biased' view, my contention is that, through FRETILIN, we were able to meet a wider span of people and to enter more ordinary homes than would have otherwise been possible. (The parliamentary delegation who were present at the same time as us, for example, had their itinerary organised by the Portuguese administration.) A further limitation is the fact that statistical figures are almost totally unobtainable. Until April, 25, 1974, the Portuguese administration refused to allow agencies like WHO into the country & there has been almost no record-keeping at all. This should be one of the first tasks of FRETILIN in power. Thus, most of the delegation's information could not be 'scientifically' checked.

In writing this report, I am assuming that people have read Grant Evans's Eastern (Portuguese) Timor: Oppression or Independence? published by AUS, & will therefore not re-iterate background information about the geography of East Timor, the staple crops, etc.

THE POLITICAL PARTIES

1. FRETILIN

There is no doubt whatsoever that FRETILIN, the Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor, holds the key to the future of East Timor. Its social base is enormous: the whole of East Timor is in a FRETILIN fever, and it is not hard to see why.

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In a country where malnutrition is rife, where illiteracy is probably 90%, where the per capita income is the lowest in S.E. Asia & lower than India's, where the people have been culturally & psychologically downgraded & intimidated by a colonial power for 450 years, FRETILIN offers the possibility of economic self-sufficiency, literacy, cultural dignity & self respect. It's leaders are people of integrity who have deep roots among the people. They are intelligent, competent & command enormous respect.

Xavier do Amaral in particular is a magnetic populist leader. A tiny, very dark man who has a habit of carrying a large cassette recorder around with him on which he alternates bad Western music with traditional Timorese music, he is personally known by an enormous number of people & is cheered wherever he goes. He cannot pass through a village in the FRETILIN jeep without stopping to talk to the people. An ex-Jesuit priest & then schoolteacher, when he speaks at mass demonstrations the whole crowd listens. A number of children came up to me at different times & told me that Xavier used to teach them. He is a typical Third World public figure.

Whereas Xavier do Amaral is fully Timorese, Jose Ramos Horta is Portuguese/Timorese. The Indonesian Consul in Dili, Mr Tomadok, who is a rather uncool diplomat & ready slanderer of the FRETILIN leadership, is fond of describing the FRETILIN leaders as 'half-castes'. And where Xavier do Amaral's politics are based on an open relaxed rapport with the people, Ramos Horta is a more closed, anxiety-ridden figure whose influences have been predominantly intellectual, co-existing with a passionate nationalism. His greatest influence has been the anti-colonialist experience of the African Portuguese colonies (he spent some time in Mozambique as a journalist) & his relating of it to the Timorese situation.

Nicolau Lobato is one of a family of FRETILIN activists. His brother, Rogerio, is an organiser of the newly-formed student union (UNETIM) & his sister is a teacher at one of the primary schools in Dili. Like most of the FRETILIN activists, he appears to be a very impressive orator, although it is hard to tell because his speeches are all in Tetum or Portuguese. It was unfortunate that we didn't speak a common language, as Nicolau is FRETILIN spokesperson for the key area of agriculture.

To dwell on personalities is not only to expose them to the dangers of sick adulation, but to deny the politics of the situation. If the personalities of the FRETILIN leadership are important it is because of the popular aspirations they represent. They are the New Timorese — educated, lean, urban-based, dignified. Xavier do Amaral has a habit of Anglicising Timorese names - Jose Ramos Horta becomes 'Joseph' & Nicolau Lobato 'Nicholas'.

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The U.D.T. leaders, by contrast, tend to be sleek, well-fed & to leave one with a feeling of double-dealing. They express a small-holder mentality & are typically higher-level administrative workers, farmers, or involved with coffee plantations. They do not seem to have any immediate identity with the Timorese masses, although my impression was that they had possessed a wider political base in the preceding months to our visit, but that that base is rapidly dwindling.

FRETILIN's socio-political base, as I have argued, is founded on a solid programme of social improvement. The main aspects of the programme are: the literacy campaign, the organisation of a student union & a worker's union & the attempt to come to terms with the central question of agriculture. FRETILIN have their own radio on the Government Radio Dili on Wednesday evenings from 7-8 pm, where they propagate their policies and play traditional Timorese music.

(i) <u>The Literacy Programme</u>. The delegation did not have the advantage of a first-hand view of the literacy campaign, so we cannot gauge its extent or success personally. Hearsay reports certainly testify to success: Australian Helen Hill who has lived in East Timor for the past four months claims that FRETILIN have had formerly illiterate people writing short stories in Tetum within a month.

The FRETILIN literacy campaign is based on the Paolo Friere method used in Brazil. Friere argues that the learning process is not neutral, that <u>what</u> people learn to read is as important as the fact that they learn to read. Thus the content of the FRETILIN literacy campaign is anti-colonialist. Although Portuguese will remain the official language for some time, FRETILIN conducts the literacy campaign in Tetum, which is the main indigenous dialect, spoken by 80% of the population.

The use of Tetum & the propagation of a written form of the language must be seen in the context of the movement for Timorese dignity & national self-respect. One illustration in the literacy handbook (Appendix B) shows a Timorese child being shouted at for his inability to read by a Portuguese teacher. The Timorese have historically been made to feel demeaned & inferior by the education system. The literacy campaign aims to eradicate this notion.

The song 'Ramelau'-the beautiful FRETILIN anthem which urges the people to build a new life together - is taught via the literacy campaign. Everywhere one goes in East Timor the people now sing 'Ramela ' & it is a symbol of the battle

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against illiteracy as part of the struggle for a new life. Ramelau is the highest mountain in Timor & the Portuguese used to boast that it was the highest peak in Portugal. Now FRETILIN has returned Ramelau to the disinherited Timorese people. 'Hey! Mt.Ramelau!' run the opening lines, 'What is higher than you? Why have the Timorese people always bowed their heads? Awake! the top of the mountain is light. Awake! A new day has come already . . . '

(ii) The Workers' Union.

On Wednesday March 19 we attended a meeting of the FRETILIN-organised Workers' Union, which was attended by about 1,000 Dili workers. Their spirit was militant & enthusiastic. This was the first meeting held for some time. The Workers' Union grew from one of the first political activities of FRETILIN which, as the Committee for the Defence of Labour, organised & won a strike for a pay rise for lower-echelon administrative workers soon after April 25, 1974. All wage-earners are organised into the union, to form a sort of Timorese One Big Union. The participation of women in the meeting we attended was noticeably low, although I was informed that the coffee-packing industry, for example, involves all women workers.

The work-force of East Timor is, needless to say, very small in the absence of any real industry. Drivers, wharf labourers, building workers and process workers in light industry like coffee processing & packing comprise the hard core of manual labourers. Administrative workers account for about 2,000 of the work-force, of whom approximately 90 per cent are Timorese & 10 per cent Portuguese/Timorese. There are very few Portuguese but those there are occupy the key positions. School teachers, the majority of whom are Timorese, are also organised into the Workers' Union.

The average annual income in East Timor is estimated to be 1000 $00 (one thousand escudos), $A33 as compared to the average in India of $A100.

The Workers' Union appears to be, along with UNETIM, a political force of great potential.

(iii) UNETIM

On March 12 I made my first contact with the national student union UNETIM (União Nacional de Estudantes de Timor), & in the following week I had long discussions with UNETIM people. Some of the most politically articulate people are found in UNETIM & it was the one area where I found any substantial

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participation by women. In FRETILIN-organised mass demonstrations, UNETIM tends to play a vanguard role, often putting forward the most advanced slogans.

There is generally a great drive for education in East Timor. Until now the only hope of entering tertiary education has been to obtain one of the few scholarships to Lisbon. Students are eager to have access to tertiary education & in this regard look to Australia to provide access until they build their own institutions. Obviously education in Australia is more feasible, economically & otherwise, than in Lisbon.

I visited the technical school in Dili which is the main centre of UNETIM organisation. The only other (state) organ of secondary education apart from the technical school is the high school or Lyceum in Dili, which students attend on completing their second year of secondary education in the technical school. There is an apparently expanding number of primary schools throughout East Timor.

There are a number of other educational establishments. The Chinese run their own schools, which are obviously privileged compared to those in the state system. There are also a number of missionary schools including an agricultural school just out of Baucau run by the Don Bosco Order, which also teaches trades (to boys only, I gather).

The technical school is poorly equipped to the extent that many rooms (science, woodwork, mechanics) must lie idle for want of equipment. There is no library. UNETIM is a militant force & the walls of the school are daubed with slogans calling for 'democracy in schools' & announcing that 'students support FRETILIN'. I gained the impression that my inspection of the school occasioned some resentment from some of the teachers. Portuguese cultural chauvinism is still very evident in the schools. I saw children in art work making mosaics of Madonnas & in the music class I observed that the children sang a number of Portuguese songs before the teacher hit on the idea of singing a traditional Timorese song, during which the few Chinese students in the class sat silent.

UNETIM, which is also closely involved with the literacy campaign, aims to counter the influence of Portuguese colonialist teaching by teaching Timorese cultural history. In response to a query of mine regarding the resistance of teachers to the demand for educational change, I learned that UNETIM had been successful in having a number of reactionary teachers dismissed. (This, of course, presents a terrible contradiction in a country where trained teachers are a valuable asset.)

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UNETIM organisation is not confined to Dili. There was a substantial UNETIM delegation at the welcoming demonstration in Baucau & I met UNETIM delegates &/or members in most of the villages.

I made some inquiry about what most students see as the aim of their education, & in particular their motives in wanting to attain tertiary education in Australia. Most I questioned seemed to be concerned with acquiring skills which they could bring back to the reconstruction of East Timor.

The demands of the UNETIM manifesto (Appendix C) include:

- [destruction of] the apparatus of fascist & paternalistic teaching;
- . . . the general & democratic reform of the educational system in collaboration with progressive teaching staff;
- combating deification of the teaching staff & the subsequent segregation of students from teachers which can only exist in a paternalistic education system . . .
- to fight for the respect of students' most profound & immediate demands: student participation in the decision-making process & in the administration of the learning institutions;
- . . . to fight for the consolidation of the democratic liberties already obtained in the teaching institutions in particular, & in the political life of the country in general . . .
- to support unconditionally all progressive movements in their fight for the freedom of oppressed & exploited peoples;

and . . . to establish contacts conducive to closer fraternal co-operation between the students of Timor & student & youth organisations of the world.

UNETIM people also spoke to me about a number of immediate practical needs, apart from long-term needs relating to tertiary education in Australia, etc. These include the production of a UNETIM badge, for which they have provided a design, the urgent need for duplicating paper to disseminate their propaganda & the need for at least one megaphone for organisational purposes.

I have reason to believe that Australian security police were observing my contact with UNETIM members. On Tuesday March 18 two Australians who were unknown to me appeared to be overhearing a conversation I had with some students in the bar of the Hotel Turismo, forcing us to move elsewhere to continue our discussion. The following day I openly marched with UNETIM students in a pro-independence demonstration which greeted the delegation of Australian Labor parliamentarians. On this occasion I was followed by two (different) Australians & photographed. The gentlemen concerned were staying at the Hotel Turismo where we were accommodated & were ostensibly members of a team of Burmah Oil employees.

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(iv) Agriculture

The problem of agrarian reform is fundamental to social change in East Timor. It is a problem which FRETILIN do not seem to have adequately tackled.

FRETILIN has piloted a number of agricultural co-operatives — in particular, Nicolau Lobato is involved in the development of such a co-operative at Bazatete. As he is the spokesperson for FRETILIN agricultural policy but does not speak English & we spoke no Portuguese it was difficult to gain a clear impression of what FRETILIN is advancing. Neither did we have the opportunity, for various reasons, to visit any of these co-operatives. We did ask a number of leading questions on agricultural policy to various FRETILIN leaders.

Timorese agricultural production cannot presently feed the Timorese people because Portuguese colonial rule has pursued a policy of growing coffee as a cash crop monoculture, a situation comparable to pre-revolutionary Cuba, where sugar cane played a similar role.

Compounding this situation is the extreme neglect of road construction by the Portuguese for centuries. In 1973, for example, 500 tons of corn were destroyed due to lack of transportation facilities. In East Timor famine in one part of the country can co-exist with over-production in another.

Colonial oppression & neglect has been largely responsible for the inability of agricultural production to meet the needs of the people. Traditional tribal structures — caste systems — & accompanying primitive methods of cultivation (the digging stick is the main means of tilling the soil) also play their part. The mountainous terrain means, too, that in many areas the land can only be worked in small plots (regardless of subdivision according to ownership) according to the terracing. From the air it was also obvious that widespread erosion has occurred — rivers bring large deposits of mud down to the coast. This is the result of the 'slash & burn' method of cultivation.

Subsistence agriculture is the dominant mode of production. While barter seems to predominate in the markets of small villages, at least, a money economy exists everywhere, probably initially the result of the imposition of the poll tax which all males over 18 must pay.

Maize & rice are the staple crops. The rice is mainly grown in the coastal lowlands, particularly around Suai. Although the water buffalo is common in East Timor, its agricultural use appears to be limited to stirring the earth in the

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rice paddies. We did not see it used to pull a plough & all inquiries as to whether it is ever used for this purpose received a negative answer. (I have since learned from one authority that it is in fact used like this in some areas.) FRETILIN people talk about the mechanisation of agriculture & the introduction of the use of the tractor. With no developing industry in East Timor, including the sort of support industries which tractors would involve, with the price of petroleum at $A1 per gallon & with the small-plot cultivation which the mountainous terrain dictates, the use of the water buffalo would appear to be more immediately feasible.

It was difficult to establish the precise form of land ownership. Although FRETILIN spokespeople tended to a 'the land is held in common' type position, arguing from a 'natural' structure of co-operation & communalisation, on other occasions we were told that the chiefs own the land, which the villagers work for nothing. The villagers certainly appear to be dependent on the goodwill or otherwise of the lurais (chiefs) & we heard of instances of tyrannical chiefs.

FRETILIN is attempting to utilise the traditional village structure to educate the people in political activity by encouraging them to elect new lurais to replace unpopular ones. Whether the same principle can be applied to agrarian reform remains to be seen, for the use of the traditional structure is a two-edged sword. Because village chiefs tend to be better educated, often, I should imagine, representing the only literate household in a village, they also tend to be more radical & are often the FRETILIN delegates for the area.

The lurais' house typically expresses superior wealth, usually having a concrete floor & often concrete benches. One member of our party who has travelled widely in South East Asia claimed that economic discrepancies within the villages in East Timor were the greatest he had seen in South East Asia. Thus FRETILIN tends to have to operate through the status quo in the villages, yet if it is going to tackle the question of land ownership it will have to eventually challenge it. Until it does, the agricultural co-operatives which have been organised will be little more than Utopian models.

The potential of agricultural production in East Timor is great. Crops that could be grown include sugar cane, tobacco, pineapple & probably most tropical fruits. The cornerstone of FRETILIN's agricultural policy is the diversification of agriculture as opposed to the cash crop monoculture. They argue that agriculture should serve the people & not the profits of a colonial power. But the crucial question of how to do this, of where to begin with agrarian reform, seems to remain unanswered or inadequately answered.

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Despite the fact that it tends to be a city-based party, FRETILIN has an enormous following in those areas where the rural poor predominate. We received a massive reception of thousands of FRETILIN supporters in Suai, for example, which is noticeably poorer than many areas. The crowd appeared to be almost 100 per cent FRETILIN, with hardly any UDT banners in evidence.

(v) The position of women

FRETILIN programme argues for the establishment of:

> Organisations for workers, women, students and youths . . . so that every person will actively contribute to the political life of the country.

As yet, the women's group has not been organised & women are not prominent in the leadership of FRETILIN. UNETIM is the only area where women are prominent & even then they do not appear to hold official positions. I was told that women form the majority in FRETILIN'S Education Committee.

The problem of women's role in East Timor is not a simple one — for a person coming from the culture of an advanced capitalist country it appears particularly complicated, & must be understood in the context of the special problems of Third World women.

I asked the Central Committees of both FRETILIN & UDT whether they envisaged introducing birth control programmes. (This was not an 'ought to' sort of question, but a genuine inquiry.) Both answered negatively, pointing out that there are no problems of overpopulation, which is true. Nicolau Lobato, for FRETILIN, replied that although there are no problems of overpopulation at the moment, FRETILIN recognises that the demographic explosion which would accompany the solving of health & malnutrition problems could negate the effect of increased food production.

Women in the women's movement in advanced capitalist countries have long recognised that what we regard as the valued right to contraception & abortion is often used by imperialist powers as a means of genocide against Third World people. Thus the demands of women in one culture cannot necessarily be generalised to another.

Timorese women are faced with a traditional tribal culture where polygamy is practised & marriage is arranged along dowry principles. This culture is in turn overlaid with the influence of Portuguese Catholicism.

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Infant mortality is a crucial problem for women. The present situation in the villages is that women typically produce about eleven children in order to have six survive. If FRETILIN succeed through health & education programmes in drastically reducing the infant mortality rate the question of contraception as a social right (separate from being economically desirable or undesirable) may then have to be faced. When a women's group is formed, infant mortality is probably one area where women will need to be fully involved in policy-making.

The FRETILIN attitude to marriage is to advocate the Catholic form of marriage as opposed to the traditional tribal form. The rationale for this is to oppose polygamy & the payment of dowries & to replace the system of arranged marriages (in which women play little consenting role) with the concept of a freely-chosen partner.

I tried in vain to determine whether abortion is practised. I do believe that it is extremely rare, but heard several different accounts. Some totally denied its practice; one account suggested that herbal abortifacients are used occasionally in the villages & that other more drastic forms are practised (also rarely) in the city. These latter cases particularly concern girls from traditional families who have become involved with Portuguese soldiers, & according to my hearsay report sometimes result in death.

One other by-product of the Portuguese army presence appears to be prostitution, of which we saw some evidence around Dili.

Another problem Timorese women face is of the differing values of city & village people. While questions like contraception, for example, may not affect village life for some decades, women in the cities are part of a developing urban culture. When they have greater access to education & play a more articulate role in public affairs — a process one can already see in motion — their social needs will also change. The question of control of their own destiny in a fuller social sense will then become more important.

FRETILIN are currently worried about the problem of persuading village women to full participation in the election of lurais which has been organised in some areas.

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Sections of the FRETILIN programme which refer to women are:

(Social Justice):

. . . c) Wages will be determined by the State on the basis of equal work, equal pay for both sexes.

d) Women workers will be paid wages during & after pregnancy

e) Educational programmes will be launched to help combat alcoholism, vagrancy, prostitution and gambling . . .

g) Organisations for workers, women, students and youth will be established . . .

FRETILIN is primarily a nationalist, anti-colonialist party which advances a programme of social reform.

Although FRETILIN firmly opposes the concept of a referendum to determine independence, arguing that national independence is a fundamental right, their programme of transition to independence is gradualist. It involves a three-way sharing of power between itself, UDT & the old Portuguese administration, for a minimum of three years before elections (Appendix D).

That the aims of FRETILIN are primarily democratic can be illustrated by their attitudes to taxation. FRETILIN policy is to replace the present iniquitous poll-tax (which places great hardship on the peasants) with a system of progressive taxation based on income.

Their internal notepaper bears the slogans: 'do povo, com o povo, para o povo' and 'por um Timor melhor!' — 'of the people, with the people, for the people' and 'for a better Timor!'

While this is true of the present, FRETILIN has set in motion, & is part of, a social process which cannot now be halted or reversed. They have struck a chord in the hearts of the Timorese people with their programme for social improvement & the movement they represent is gathering momentum at an enormous rate. From a small group who organised the first strike in East Timorese history soon after the Lisbon coup of April 25, 1974, FRETILIN has grown into a political movement which effectively wields the social power in East Timor in March 1975.

The future of FRETILIN is held in the precarious balance between the expediencies of Australian foreign policy, Indonesian military intentions & Portuguese domestic politics. Whether or not circumstances will actually place the party in the position to implement its transitional programme for independence remains to be seen.

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It should be borne in mind that the FRETILIN leadership is still relatively politically unformed. The problem of isolation from the outside world is an enormous one. Internationalist influence has been confined fairly well to contact with Australians, with Lisbon & with the Portuguese African colonies. The only comparable political experience which has been absorbed has been that of Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau & Angola.

2. UDT

UDT stands for Uniao Democratica Timorense -- Timorese Democratic Union. Formerly an overtly pro-Portuguese party which advocated:

> Accelerated promotion -- proceeding in the shadow of the Portuguese flag -- of the social, economic, cultural and political development of the Timorese people

and:

> Integration of the Timorese people through the use of the Portuguese language

it now advocates independence. This change occurred mainly because of the insistence of the Portuguese administration that they are no longer interested in any colony 'proceeding in the shadow of the Portuguese flag.' As a result of their new pro-independence stand, UDT entered into a coalition with FRETILIN in January 1975.

Our meeting with the Central Committees of FRETILIN & UDT on March 12 was the occasion of a new policy statement from UDT. From a party which a short time ago supported Portuguese colonialism & saw its function as 'to enlighten those of the interior . . . [&] to give knowledge to the Timorese people'[1] UDT has (ostensibly) moved to a position which involves a strong anti-colonialist, anti-imperialist rhetoric.

The UDT stated their three basic tenets as being: the right to independence, opposition to integration & the promotion of social justice (opposition to the subordination of community interests to private interests). They stated that they were committed to:

> . . . endeavour to destroy monopolies, capitalism and the classsystem in Timorese society -- this should not, however, be a dogmatic principle but will be a permanent guide to action.

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[1] Provisional Statutes of UDT in Grant Evans, Eastern (Portuguese) Timor: Independence or Oppression? (AUS, Sydney, 1975), Appendices.

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UDT does not appear to have a coherently-developed programme for social improvement. Unlike FRETILIN they do not seem to have thought about the implementation of policies on health, agriculture & education, for example.

Despite their anti-capitalist rhetoric UDT has some marked differences with FRETILIN over the question of 'development'. Whereas UDT says that it will accept foreign investment in Timor 'so long as it serve the people', FRETILIN adds a stronger proviso. In the words of Ramos Horta:

> FRETILIN is against neo-colonialism; we don't want to be exploited by a new foreign power, but Timor needs foreign investment. Therefore we will accept foreign investment for production but never for consumption, which will produce new habits.

Similarly, FRETILIN is very cautious about developing a tourist industry; UDT's attitude to tourism is that it sees the tourist industry as 'one of the biggest sources of capital in Timor' & therefore to be encouraged.

Differing attitudes to a question about Baucau airport were interesting. The international airport at Baucau is a lavish affair which contrasts starkly with the neglect of public works & the universal poverty of East Timor. Neither party opposes its existence. (As Xavier do Amaral said in private conversation 'Why oppose it? It is there now — it will be used.') But UDT's first response to the question was that they saw it as 'necessary to bring foreign companies here'.

UDT leaders are typically smallholders, higher administration workers & coffee plantation owners. Unlike the FRETILIN leaders who were frequently mobbed in the villages & invariably had personal acquaintances there, UDT cadres who accompanied us to villages usually only knew some of the local officials. One has the feeling that basically they would like to see East Timor 'modernised' & that their involvement with this process is more than abstract.

What is the level of UDT support? Using the impressionistic yardstick of banners displayed at the numerous receptions we received, & people spoken with, 10-15 per cent seems to be the largest support in any area. Areas where support is this strong usually coincide with greater contact with Portuguese authorities — Alieu, Maubisse & Baucau are examples. In some areas UDT support was barely, if at all, visible. The southern lowlands around Suai, an area of the rural poor, appeared to be almost totally pro-FRETILIN (support for the one party is in inverse proportion to support for the other).

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The following for UDT may have altered quite drastically in the last month or so. I base this on the fact that I was told that Maubisse, which we visited on March 15, was formerly a UDT stronghold. It was certainly pro-FRETILIN when we saw it.

3. APODETI

The Associaçao Popular Democratica Timorense is the party which advocates integration with Indonesia. It calls for the compulsory teaching of Bahasa Indonesian as the first language in all East Timorese secondary schools.

APODETI is not publicly visible in East Timor. APODETI people certainly made no appearance at demonstrations — their only presence was on FRETILIN-UDT banners denouncing them. We encountered no APODETI supporters in any of the villages, with one exception.

(I should qualify these remarks by saying that I had even less contact with pro-APODETI people than the rest of the delegation. As the AUS delegate, I felt it was necessary to talk with students as often as possible, thus altered my itinerary on several occasions. Others in the delegation interviewed a pro-APODETI lurai from Atsabe gaoled in Dili, the Indonesian Consul Mr Tomadok & a pro-APODETI rajah who lives in Dili.)

Generally the only public impression one has of APODETI is of universal hatred & fear. Anti-APODETI slogans are shouted at demonstrations. Students told me, in anguished tones, that they didn't want to be forced to learn Bahasa Indonesian.

I personally had only one contact with an APODETI supporter. Outside Ainaro we met a man wearing an APODETI T-shirt (these were distributed free by APODETI some months ago). We stopped the jeep & spoke to him, through an interpreter. He was a card-carrying member, but could only say that he supported them because they gave him a T-shirt & he didn't know what they stood for.

We also had an amusing experience concerning APODETI on arriving in Maubisse, where an irate local ran everywhere behind our jeep shouting 'APODETI is a liar!' This performance continued right up to our hotel, the performer having to follow up a mountain track to convey his message that far. We finally learned from discussion with him that on the preceding day, Friday, APODETI delegates had been to Maubisse & informed the township that FRETILIN & their guests were not

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arriving the next day as planned, but on Sunday, thus the welcoming demonstration would have to be postponed. Needless to say, the locals took no notice apart from being rather irate, as our friend was.

As APODETI appears to have no indigenous support it is hard not to conclude that it is an externally-inspired movement, borne out, perhaps, by their membership requirements which are that one should preferably be 'A Timorese by birth, living in or outside Timor.' Presumably this includes the population of West (Indonesian) Timor.

The present Indonesian position

It is hard to discuss APODETI & attitudes to APODETI in isolation from Indonesian attitudes.

I should make these qualifications before discussing Indonesian attitudes: (i) impressions from inside East Timor are not sufficient to draw a proper conclusion about Indonesian intentions in the area — they can be only impressions; (ii) Our delegation did not visit areas closer to the border than Suai; & (iii) this writer has no real background in West Timor. (It is evident that 500 years of Portuguese culture has made a deep impact on the traditional culture of the East & it is arguable that it has produced a new & distinct East Timorese culture.)

While we were in East Timor Australian journalists were still effectively banned from entering West Timor.

Radio Kupang continued to beam aggressive broadcasts into East Timor. These frequently commence with a burst of machine-gun fire & are conducted in the local dialects. Prior to April 25 1974, Radio Kupang had never bothered with East Timor & had certainly never broadcast in any East Timorese dialects.

In response to a question about Indonesian intentions at the FRETILIN Central Committee meeting, a spokesperson said:

> . . . on the one hand, the official attitude claims Indonesia has no territorial ambitions, on the other hand Radio Kupang broadcasts daily here, attacking the Armed Forces Movement, threatening the people & saying that once things change the people will feel lost . . .

Two hundred Timorese are believed to be held in West Timor as a result of their being ordered to report over the border for military training by the above-mentioned Atsabe chief.

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The many slogans around Dili express popular apprehensions. They are mainly on the walls of Chinese shops & read 'Death to traitors!', 'Beware of traitors!' & 'Whoever sells our country is a traitor!'

The activities of the Indonesian Consul in Dili, Mr Tomadok, are rather unorthodox & involve a blatant meddling in local politics. When members of our delegation went to interview him he attacked the personal integrity of a number of popular political figures in Dili. Some time ago at the height of Timorese tension over Indonesia, Mr Tomadok placed photos of tanks & other military hardware in a showcase outside the Consulate. When local Timorese smashed it he complained that his life was being threatened & flamboyantly evacuated his wife & children to Jakarta.

Australian-Indonesian war games now taking place in the Java Sea (Sydney Morning Herald March 21 1975) must be doing little to reassure the Timorese of a principled Australian stand on East Timorese independence.

All this said, the immediate situation with Indonesia does seem to have improved. The main period of concern was early this year when East Timor was effectively isolated from outside contact by the Darwin cyclone & subsequent cancellation of Darwin-Baucau TAA Services. TAA have just now resumed flights.

Hopefully, too, the visit of six parliamentarian members of the Labor Party's foreign affairs & defence committee to East Timor & their reassurances of support for independence have not gone unnoticed in Jakarta. More important, if it has the function of driving a wedge between Labor Party politicians on the issue & thus whittling support away from the appeasement policies of the Whitlam government vis-a-vis Indonesia its results will be positive for the Timorese.

The most recent direct report that the situation with Indonesia is temporarily stable came back with the parliamentary delegation who spoke with the Portuguese Governor on his return to East Timor from Lisbon. En route to Dili he had sought (& was given) new assurances that Indonesia would respect East Timorese territorial integrity.

This can be taken as accounting only for the immediate future. The long-term future of East Timor hangs in the balance, to be affected by many factors other than the will of the Timorese people — Portuguese domestic politics, factional power struggles in Indonesia & Australian foreign policy stances.

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The Whitlam government has yet to make a statement of unequivocal political support for East Timorese independence in the event of Indonesian military aggression. It is still publicly pursuing a policy of appeasement towards Indonesia in the interests of Australian capital there. Until such a statement is forthcoming the Whitlam government must stand indicted by the international labour movement as a party which places Australian capital above the demand of 650,000 Timorese for the right to determine their own future free from colonial oppression.

Portugal & the Armed Forces Movement

The future of East Timor still depends on Portuguese political events. Developments there suggest that there are grave dangers for democracy in Portugal &, in turn, the independence movement in Timor. Two of the more worrying possibilities are outlined below:

1. The Armed Forces Movement (AFM) itself has rightward-leaning tendencies. It is certainly not a stable political force. In Dili the delegation had dinner with a Portuguese captain from the Armed Forces Movement. He told us that he was firmly opposed to Portugal 'turning Communist' & argued that in a country which had experienced fascist rule for so long & had no democratic tradition it was necessary for the military (in the form of the AFM) to be a sort of upper house to the Portuguese parliament. The analogy he made was with the House of Lords.

National Times correspondent Christopher Reed recently reported (National Times, March 24-29, p.9) from Lisbon:

> Now ruling the nation is a left-wing military oligarchy called the Supreme Revolutionary Council. It has powers to veto proposals of civilian politicians to be voted into a constituent assembly if elections are held next month. . . True democracy seems to be slipping away.

The dispatch ends ominously:

> . . . when President Costa Gomes in his inaugural speech for the AFM Revolutionary Council spoke of the peopls's political innocence one had the feeling that the ghost of the dictator Salazar was nodding, if not chuckling, in agreement.

Perhaps the rightward trend of the AFM domestically should not be seen as greatly affecting the Timorese, in that the AFM seems to be fairly unshakeable in its decolonisation policy. It is conceivable that even a conservative regime could support decolonisation, for its own reasons. Indeed, one sees the

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best aspect of the AFM in Dili & it is probably this which accounts for the great confidence which the FRETILIN leadership place in the AFM. It is, in my opinion, perhaps an inordinate confidence, although Jose Ramos Horta was quoted in an interview with Development News Digest of September '74 as saying:

> After the coup we were free and we could speak about independence, and this was really exciting. But, of course, I still don't trust military regimes.

2. Probably the worst possibility that exists is that of a right-wing counter-coup, a possibility which most leftists currently dismiss. I do not think it can be dismissed lightly; the Timorese & their supporters here should follow the situation closely.

So long as a Portuguese administrative structure remains in Timor, the Timorese stand to be affected by events in Portugal. At the worst, Portuguese capital could be withdrawn very rapidly, attempts to sabotage the independence movement could be made, & a new wave of repression set in. The coalition with the formerly pro-Portuguese UDT, whose anti-colonialist rhetoric does not appear to run very deep, would also be affected.

I put the question of the dependence of the East Timorese independence movement on the situation in Portugal to Jose Ramos Horta in an informal discussion. He described East Timor at the moment as being like a brittle shell, which could be broken at any moment. He agreed that if there was a right-wing reversal in Portugal, it would be disastrous for East Timor.

At the time of writing the political situation in Portugal appears to be in a state of flux.

The FRETILIN-UDT coalition

I was initially extremely puzzled by the FRETILIN-UDT coalition & could see no real reason for it. Consequently, I questioned a number of FRETILIN people about it.

FRETILIN was initially, as stated above, the Committee for the Defence of Labour. As its political base grew it changed its name to the Timorese Social Democratic Association (ASDT) & then to FRETILIN, the Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor. They changed their name, according to Grant Evans, 'because they felt it narrowed their mass support'. The FRETILIN programme argues that the party must be a revolutionary front capable of uniting 'all Timorese patriots'.

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Active mass support for FRETILIN is enormous in East Timor — at least 90 per cent in most areas. The same cannot be said for UDT whose following is insignificant & apparently in the process of dwindling. It appears to be a spent political force, yet at the height of FRETILIN's power & from a position of supreme political strength, FRETILIN seems to be voluntarily ceding that power to UDT through the coalition which promises an inproportionate 1/3 of power to UDT in a transitional government. Why?

It seems clear that it is not a real coalition, but one in name only, in that FRETILIN policies generally prevail because of their superior position.

The only plausible explanation that can be offered is to be found in the economic interests of those whom UDT represents, interests which could engender tension within the coalition over questions of fundamental social re-organisation.

UDT are making the most of a (for them) unfavourable political climate by entering the coalition with FRETILIN. The possibility of their position changing with a changed political climate could be worrying.

Clearly, the greatest possible unity is desirable in the face of Indonesian aggression. FRETILIN leaders contend that in the previous situation where UDT was a political rival their public divisiveness was harming the cause of independence. No-one could argue against such unity — the needs of the Timorese must come first. But a looser-style united front situation where political differences are freely acknowledged but where there is a working agreement around certain common points — in this case, an alliance against Indonesia — would perhaps have been more appropriate.

FRETILIN's most valuable resource is the support of the Timorese people. Ultimately it is the only consistent dynamo for social change.

The future

The East Timorese have a massive task of reconstruction ahead of them. The neglect & oppression of 450 years of Portuguese colonialism will not be eradicated overnight. Very apparent & widespread health problems — vitamin deficiency diseases, tuberculosis, malaria, eye diseases, dental diseases, general malnutrition & infant mortality arising from all those causes — point to the deeper problem of a country which has not been able to feed its own people. A moribund economy, no trafficable road system, a skeletal education system,

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over-burdened & culturally oppressive, complicate the problem, a problem which did not exist for the Portuguese — the Timorese did not matter. It is the problem of an awakening people.

Whether or not the organised movement which expresses that awakening will be allowed to survive remains to be seen. It could be crushed by external or internal events, neither of which can be divorced from international power shifts. One means of defending that movement & heightening its chances of survival is to offer immediate solidarity to it & in so doing alert the international community (including students) to its struggle. If, alternatively, that movement can flower in the immediate future, FRETILIN may well find itself thrust into power in a very short space of time. The solidarity of the Australian movement will be no less valuable in these circumstances where its ability to deal with the abovementioned social problems will be severely tested.

The presence of oil & probably other mineral resources at a time when petrodollars are increasingly important upgrades Timor as a prize in international power politics. Two days prior to our arrival Woodside-Burmah made an offshore strike off Suai & BHP have been conducting geological surveys for some time. Symptomatically, the waters in which the strike was made are under dispute. FRETILIN policy on mineral resources is to demand equity, a policy which will endear them even less to potential interferers, — the current policy provides open slather for oil companies.

The Whitlam government's policy of looking to Australian alliances with Asia deserves wholehearted support. The Australian labour movement (like the rest of Australian society) has traditionally ignored Asia & looked towards the great metropolises of Europe & America. It has shared complicity not only in the oppression of the Australian Aborigines but also of the peoples of South East Asia. We can do something to redress the balance now.

The Whitlam government's policy of building unconditional alliances with <u>any</u> South East Asian regime does not deserve support. The present alliance with an Indonesian regime with a record of bloody repression at home & expansionist ambitions abroad is a disgrace, especially now, when mass trials of political dissidents (including students) are being conducted. AUS must think seriously about support for Labor in the next elections if this trend is not reversed & if no statement of unequivocal support for East Timorese independence is forthcoming. Australian supply of military training & hardware to Indonesia is unacceptable.

Here, then, is an opportunity for Australian students to play a vital solidarity role & build links with a freedom movement right on our doorstep. In the coming period there will be a scramble from many quarters to exert influence on those who will hold political power in East Timor. This places on AUS an extra responsibility to be scrupulously principled in their dealings with the leadership of the independence movement.

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Recommendations

What form should our support take? I would argue that the general thrust of our support should be against direct 'aid' type programmes with all their paternalistic & palliative connotations & in favour of support for the organs of political power which the Timorese themselves are constructing.

Thus:

1) that AUS should provide unconditional political & practical support for FRETILIN & the independence movement it represents. This should be understood not to involve forfeiture of the right to engage in criticism in a mutual & fraternal spirit. It should include the establishment of solidarity organisations, fund-raising & the organisation of demonstrations & other political actions in support of East Timorese independence.

2) That AUS works to build direct links with UNETIM, the national student organisation.

3) That AUS works to build & strengthen general links of friendship between Australian students & the Timorese people.

4) That AUS adopts a stance of consistent opposition to an unconditional alliance with Indonesia, particularly so long as the pattern of Indonesian repression at home & belligerent behaviour abroad continues. We demand that the responsibilities of Australian labour to international liberation movements take precedence over loyalty to Australian capital in Indonosia. AUS should serve notice on the Whitlam government that future considerations of electoral support by AUS must be tempered by the ALP's public attitudes to the Indonesian alliance & the East Timorese independence movement.

Flowing from recommendations 1) & 2) are certain practical needs which FRETILIN & UNETIM requested me to convey to AUS:

a) The purchase of megaphones. FRETILIN currently has one megaphone which is not only inadequate for the average Dili-sized demonstration but is liable to be needed simultaneously in several villages. Approximately five are needed, of which at least one should go specifically to UNETIM.

b) Production of badges. UNETIM is eager to produce their own badge. Apart from their direct political value they can be used for fundraising. I have a copy of the design & suggest that AUS pay for the production of a quantity of UNETIM badges.

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c) Duplicating paper. UNETIM desperately needs duplicating paper to further their activities. The paper itself, rather than the money, is required because of problems of price & availability in Timor.

d) Publication of UNETIM programme. UNETIM's programme of political demands is a radical manifesto, the publication of which could enhance Australian students' appreciation of the political situation in East Timor. I suggest that AUS publish copies of the UNETIM manifesto, with an introduction, & distribute it among Australian students.

e) Agitation to re-open the Australian Consulate in Dili. The Timorese regard an Australian diplomatic presence in East Timor as a potentially important factor in East Timorese relations with Indonesia. The re-opening of the Consulate would be seen as a step towards expressing a measure of concern for East Timorese independence by the Whitlam government. FRETILIN have called on all Australian sympathisers, including the trade unions & AUS, to put pressure on the Labor government to re-open the Consulate.

f) Scholarships. East Timorese students are eager for access to tertiary educational institutions, which is currently denied them. AUS could not only work towards the establishment of its own scheme, but more importantly could work to influence the government to establish a scholarship scheme involving East Timorese students.

Flowing from 3), FRETILIN people are eager to establish an interchange between East Timorese & sympathetic Australians. They have extended an invitation to Australian students to stay in Timorese villages over their vacation. AUS should, however, approach any attempt to elevate this generous invitation into a regular exchange scheme very cautiously. The dangers of cultural arrogance from young Australians are great & the problems arising from the New Guinea village scheme should be noted. Perhaps a judiciously-screened group on an ad hoc basis for the coming summer to acquaint themselves with the political situation & work with & meet local people would be preferable.

On the other hand both Timorese & Australian students would stand to benefit greatly by a visit of Timorese students to speak here & present their case personally. AUS should strongly consider funding a visit/speaking tour by some UNETIM representatives.

In conclusion, I would reiterate that the most effective form of support we can provide is political support for East Timorese independence.

April 3 1975.

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