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A Publication
of the United Nations
Department of Political Affairs,
Trusteeship and Decolonization

No. 7
August 1976

Issue on East Timor

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PART ONE - THE POLITICAL EVOLUTION OF PORTUGUESE TIMOR

I - The Land and Its People

The island of Timor lies at the extreme eastern tip of the Nusatenggara archipelago, some nine degrees south of the Equator, and has a total area of approximately 30,000 square kilometres. Politically the western half of the island with the exception of the enclave of Oecusse Ambeno forms part of the Republic of Indonesia. The area under Portuguese administration totals 18,899 square kilometres (7,400 square miles) comprising the eastern half of the island together with the enclave of Oecusse in the north-west the island of Ataúro off the northern coast and the small uninhabited island of Jacó off the extreme eastern tip. Other than Indonesia with which East Timor shares a common border, its nearest neighbour is Australia; Darwin, the capital of Australia's Northern Territory is roughly 400 miles south-east of Timor. 1/

Geographically the terrain of Timor is rugged with high mountains rising abruptly from the sea along the northern coast; several peaks are in excess of 9,000 feet. A central range of mountains creates a watershed with rivers running north and south. The southern coastal plain is generally wide with swampy areas at the river mouths and deltas.

The climate of Timor is tropical. Two seasons may be distinguished a dry one lasting from May to November and a rainy season from December to April where under the influence of the north-west monsoon violent downpours frequently occur making certain areas, especially in the mountainous interior, entirely inaccessible by land.

1/ Until recently the only regular air link between Portuguese Timor and the outside world was provided by a bi-weekly flight between Darwin and Baucau.

According to the census of 1970, the population of Portuguese Timor was 609,477. More recent estimates put the population at between 650,000 and 670,000. 2/ As of December 1975 it was the third largest non-self-governing territory after Southern Rhodesia and Namibia in the list of the Special Committee on Decolonization. 3/ Some 30 independent States of the United Nations have populations of below one million.

Except for a few thousand persons of Chinese, European and mixed ancestry most of the population is of Timorese origin. Physically the East Timorese display a mixture of Malay and Melanesian traits being, generally speaking, dark skinned and lightly built. 4/ Though Portuguese has until now been the official language of East Timor, several indigenous languages are spoken, one of which, Tetum, together with Portuguese serves as lingua franca. Tetum belongs to the Austronesian group of languages and is related to Malay, though it is distinctly different from Bahasa Indonesian. 5/

Most Timorese are animist but, according to recent statistics, some 200,000 are at least nominally Roman Catholics.

Economically the Territory is extremely underdeveloped, the result of centuries of neglect by the metropolitan Power. 6/ Although the Territory is believed to have deposits of copper, gold, manganese and petroleum its economy remains purely agricultural with coffee accounting

2/ See Report by the Secretary-General in pursuance of Security Council Resolution 384 (1975) S/12011, paragraph 7.

3/ See table VII in the United Nations publication Decolonization, Vol. II No.6 (December 1975).

4/ Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol.22 (1972 ed.).

5/ J.S. Hoadley, "The Future of Portuguese Timor", Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, (Singapore), Occasional Paper No.27, March 1975 and "Portuguese Timor", Parliament of Australia, Legislative Research Service, prepared by Foreign Affairs Group, 14 March 1975.

6/ For example it was only in 1962 that Dili, the capital, was provided with a town electricity supply and up to 1964 Dili had to do without any port facilities, vessels being unloaded by means of landing barges.

for some 80 per cent of the Territory's exports. 7/ There is little industry and mineral prospecting has so far been limited to oil exploration mainly off-shore. 8/ According to figures published in a report of the Banco Nacional Ultramarino - the only bank to operate in East Timor - per capita GNP is little more than US\$ 40 per annum. It would appear, however, that the standard of living is not notably different in the Western part of Timor. 9/

In contrast with other former Portuguese colonies, Timor's trade has been mainly with countries of the region rather than with Portugal.

Educationally, less than 10 per cent of the population is reported to be literate though the school-age population has apparently greatly increased in recent years. 10/ There is only one secondary school at Dili the capital. The number of university graduates, mainly from Portuguese tertiary institutions, is thus, not surprisingly small. 11/

The social organization of East Timor, outside the main population centres, displays many similarities to that prevailing in the island of New Guinea - group land ownership, group conflict resolution processes, close connexion between garden tending, food gathering and harvesting with ritual rites to ensure success of the outcome. The most important difference with New Guinea lies in the existence of hereditary regulos or liurais whose power was deliberately enhanced by the Portuguese, who,

7/ Most of the coffee exported was produced by individual Portuguese plantation owners, some Chinese and a state-owned enterprise. See Peter Hastings, "The Timor Problem, I" in Australian Outlook, vol.29, No.1.

8/ Up to 1974 four companies all with headquarters in Australia were engaged in petroleum prospecting. In January 1974 the Portuguese Government granted the Oceanic Exploration Company of the United States an oil prospecting concession in Timor. See Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirtieth Session, Supplement No.23 (A/10023/Rev.1), chap.VIII, annex, sect.B.

9/ Parliament of Australia, Legislative Research Service, op.cit.

10/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirtieth Session, Supplement No.23 (A/10023/Rev.1), chap.VIII, annex, sect. B., paras. 54-56. At the 1950 census it was estimated that 95 to 99 per cent of the population was illiterate Ibid., Seventeenth Session, annexes, add.to agenda item 54 (A/5160 and Add.1-2).

11/ It was reported that by late 1974 there were fewer than 10 Timorese holding university degrees. Ibid., Thirtieth Session, Supplement No.23 (A/10023/Rev.1), chap.VIII, annex, sect.B, para. 56. However, in 1975 there were 39 Timorese students in Portuguese universities and another 38 were due to commence degree courses that year. (Hastings op.cit.)

short of cash and numbers pursued a policy of "divide and rule", deliberately maintaining tribal animosities and shifting their support from one chief to another. 12/

II - Brief Historical Outline

The first recorded European contact with Timor took place somewhere between 1512 and 1520 when Portuguese ships apparently visited the island in the course of their voyages between Malacca and the Moluccas. But it was not until the last quarter of the sixteenth century that a group of Dominican friars acting under the protection of the Portuguese crown became the first Europeans to establish a permanent settlement in Timor. 13/

By the middle of the seventeenth century, the Dutch following hard in the wake of the Portuguese, had expelled the latter from the Moluccas and the other islands in the East Indies with the exception of those in the Lesser Sunda group - Timor, Solor and Flores. In 1651 the Dutch took Kupang in the extreme west of Timor from where they progressively expanded their influence in the western half of the island in the course of the following century. 14/

The Portuguese crown was little interested in Timor and effective control - and opposition to the Dutch - was in the hands of the resident Dominican missionaries. It was only in 1702 that the Portuguese crown assumed the formal administration of Timor and appointed a governor, under the jurisdiction of the Viceroy at Goa, who established his headquarters in Lifau in the north-west coast of Timor in what is now the enclave of Oecusse Ambeno. In 1769, fearing a Dutch attack, the Portuguese moved the capital from Oecusse to Dili in the north-east.

In 1859, eight years after it had been ejected from its last remaining footholds in Solor and Flores, Portugal signed a treaty with the Netherlands formally abandoning its claims to those two islands as well as setting

12/ Hastings, op.cit.

13/ C.R. Boxer, The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825, Chapter V, Hutchinson and Co. Ltd. (London, 1969).

14/ Ibid.

the boundary between Dutch and Portuguese Timor. The boundaries were further revised in the Luso-Hollandesa Treaty of 1904 and in the Arbitral Sentence of M. Lardy of June 1914, which enshrined the boundaries between East and West Timor to this day. 15/

In 1896, Timor which had been governed jointly with Macau since 1844, became a separate colony. In 1910 there was a large-scale rebellion against Portuguese rule in Timor. It was led by a liurai who succeeded in establishing a seat of government in the interior of the island for a period of 18 months. The uprising was eventually quelled when two Portuguese warships arrived from Mozambique and Lisbon in August 1912. Over 3,000 Timorese were reportedly killed and 4,000 captured for their role in the rebellion. 16/

The period between the wars was one of general stagnation, although the administration was put on a more regular footing and the number of Portuguese administrators increased. Even so there were only 200 Portuguese civilians in Timor in 1928 and 300 soldiers. 17/ Much of the administration was carried out by Portuguese, who had been deported to Timor as political undesirables by the Salazar régime.

During World War II, though Portugal was neutral, Japanese and Allied Australian/Dutch forces landed in Timor which became the scene of heavy fighting between the two contending forces. By all accounts the Japanese occupation was particularly brutal, their ruthless policy over food collection being reportedly responsible for the famine that ravaged the territory and which caused an estimated 40,000 deaths. Official figures show that the population of East Timor actually declined during the period 1930-1946 from 472,000 to 403,000. 18/

After World War II the reconstruction of Portuguese Timor proceeded at a slow pace, the territory continuing to be regarded as a backwater of Portugal's colonial empire. In 1951 Timor became an "overseas province" of Portugal, and like the rest of Portugal's colonies, was regarded under the Salazarist mythology as an integral part of the Portuguese State. 19/ Under the Overseas Organic Law of 1972 the territory was formally designated an "autonomous region of the Portuguese Republic" with a Legislative Assembly elected on corporative lines, though effective power continued to be vested in Lisbon.

15/ Dutch Timor and the Lesser Sunda Islands; published by His Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1920.

16/ Helen Hill, The Timor Story, (Melbourne, 1976).

17/ Hastings, op.cit.

18/ Hastings, op.cit., and Parliament of Australia, Legislative Research Service, op.cit.

19/ See below page 39.

III - Repercussions in East Timor of the change of régime in Lisbon

Formation of Political Parties

Shortly after the overthrow in April 1974 of the Caetano régime in Portugal three political parties emerged in the Territory, each advocating at the time different alternatives for the future of Timor: the União Democrática de Timor (UDT) which supported the continuation of the Portuguese presence, 20/ the Frente Revolucionária de Timor Leste Independente (FRETILIN), 21/ which advocated complete independence of East Timor after a relatively brief transitional period and the Associação Popular Democrática de Timor (APODETI) which favoured integration with Indonesia.

The UDT was originally led by Mario Carrascalão, a wealthy partly Portuguese coffee planter and forestry engineer, who had reportedly been associated with the Portuguese National Union, the former party of the Salazar/Caetano régime. 22/ This fact appears to have been partly responsible for his early replacement as UDT's President by Francisco Lopes da Cruz, the director of "A Voz de Timor", the colony's only newspaper. Domingos de Oliveira, a civil servant reportedly with business and coffee estate interests, became Secretary-General. UDT's closest followers were higher civil servants, some of the régulos who also served as petty territorial officers, villagers who regarded the Portuguese flag as a

20/ The UDT manifesto, dated 11 May 1974, stated among its basic objectives the achievement of "progressive autonomy" and increased participation of Timorese in all sectors of public administration but "always under the Portuguese flag" - quoted by J. Stephen Hoadley, op.cit.

21/ FRETILIN started life under the name "Associação Social Democrata Timorense".

22/ Hoadley, op.cit., see also Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirtieth Session, Supplement No.23 (A/10023/Rev.1), chap. VIII, annex, sect. B.

mystical symbol, some businessmen of Chinese origin 23/ and the local Portuguese community. 24/ The party reportedly received official Portuguese encouragement, through cash subsidies and radio time, during the period preceding the arrival of the new Portuguese Governor in November 1974. Originally UDT favoured a formal and permanent relationship with Portugal with limited autonomy at home. 25/ However with the fall of General Spínola from power and the fading away of his original concept of a federation of Portuguese speaking nations 26/, UDT began to support the notion of independence "after a period of fifteen to twenty years", this period being progressively reduced to three to five. The party's programme also declared support for basic democratic freedoms and stated that office-holders of the Party must "not have belonged to any political ideology which supports the alienation of the Province to any foreign power". 27/

UDT has been regarded by some observers of the Timor political scene as originally the strongest and most influential of the Timorese political parties. However, in the view of these observers its lack of positive policies, its associations with the "ancien régime", together with its initial reluctance to support the ultimate goal of full independence led many of the party's original followers to swing their support to FRETILIN which by early 1975 was generally considered to have become the largest party in the Territory. 28/

23/ Though no recent official figures are available on the number of persons of Chinese origin resident in Timor, most sources put the number at about 15,000.

24/ The number of Portuguese civilians has been estimated at below one thousand.

25/ The party's platform called for "progressive autonomy" within a "pluricontinental and multiracial Portuguese community".

26/ Antonio de Spínola, Portugal e o Futuro, Arcadia, (Lisbon, March 1974) President Spínola resigned his office at the end of September 1974.

27/ Parliament of Australia, Legislative Research Services, op.cit.

28/ See in this connexion Working Paper on Timor prepared by the United Nations Secretariat in Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirtieth Session, Supplement No.23 (A/10023/Rev.1), chap.VIII, annex, sect.B; Parliament of Australia, Legislative Research Service, op.cit; Stephen Hoadley, op.cit.; and Helen Hill, "Australia and Portuguese Timor-between principles and pragmatism", paper to Australasian Political Science Conference, (Canberra, August 1975).

FRETILIN, in contrast to UDT, emerged out of a clandestine discussion group which had unsuccessfully attempted to set up an anti-Portuguese liberation movement. 29/ FRETILIN's original manifesto asserted East Timor's "right to independence" and called for the "immediate participation of competent Timorese in the local administration and government" and "rejection of colonialism and active prevention of neocolonialism". 30/ The party originally found support amongst the small intellectual community of the Territory, as well as amongst lower civil servants, teachers, students and recent migrants from the hills to the towns of Timor's north coast.

The leader of FRETILIN, is Francisco Xavier do Amaral, a graduate of the Jesuit seminary in Macau who at the time of the founding of the party was a middle-level government official. Other leaders of the party are José Ramos Horta, a journalist for the Dili newspaper "A Voz de Timor" whose political views caused him to spend a period in exile in Mozambique under the Caetano régime, and Nicolau Lobato, a school teacher.

Contrary to the claims of some of its critics at home and abroad FRETILIN's programme has been regarded by most observers of the Timorese scene as more reformist than revolutionary. It called for the "gradual elimination of colonial relations" and for agrarian reform, large farms and fertile lands not under cultivation to be expropriated and turned into people's cooperatives. Existing Catholic and Chinese schools were to remain but were to be supplemented with people's schools and literacy classes organized by "revolutionary brigades" of high school students sent to the villages from the towns. Chinese economic enterprises were guaranteed and a territory-wide system of producer/consumer cooperatives was to be established for the purposes of supplying basic goods to the poor at low prices. Controlled foreign aid and investment were to be allowed in. FRETILIN's foreign policy was to be based on a policy of non-alignment and of good neighbourliness and non-interference with the countries of the geographical area in which Timor was situated. 31/

29/ It has been reported that they had appealed in the early 1970's to Indonesia for arms without success.

30/ Programme of the Revolutionary Front of East Timor, in the "Struggle for East Timor" published by Europe-Third World Research Centre (London).

31/ Ibid., see also Helen Hill, op.cit.; Stephen Hoadley, op.cit., and "Civil War in East Timor", in South East Asian Affairs, 1976 (published by the Institute of South East Asian Studies, Singapore) and Parliament of Australia, Legislative Research Service, Foreign Affairs Group, paper of 14 March 1975.

APODETI is the only party which since its foundation, has stood for union with Indonesia. This objective has been based on the party's conviction that the colony was not economically viable nor politically developed enough to stand alone in the world, as well as on the argument of the common ethnic and cultural background of Timorese on both parts of the island. At the same time the party's manifesto stated that "any precipitated choice could be the ruin of Timor...given the absence of political and economic maturity in Timor". 32/

APODETI's President, Arnaldo dos Reis Araújo spent a period of captivity under the former Portuguese régime on charges, formally recognized by APODETI, of having collaborated with the Japanese during the Second World War. 33/ Other APODETI leaders were José Osório Soares, the party's Secretary-General and Guilherme Gonçalves, the liurai of Atsabe. APODETI apparently attracted little support and has generally been regarded as the smallest of the three political parties to have emerged by May 1974. 34/

32/ Parliament of Australia, Legislative Research Service, op.cit.

33/ In the course of the Security Council debate on Timor in April 1976 (see below pages 62-63) Mr. Guilherme Gonçalves, an APODETI leader, and "Chairman of the Advisory Council of the Provisional Government of East Timor" said: "Everyone in Timor knows that Mr. Arnaldo Araújo did not collaborate with the Allies against the Japanese during the Second World War, as did many other leaders of the people elsewhere in Asia. The colonial people of that time looked upon Japan as their liberator and ally against their European oppressors". (S/PV.1909, pp.43-45).

34/ See, for instance, Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirtieth Session, Supplement No.23 (A/10023/Rev.1), chap.VIII, annex, sect.B, as well as articles cited above by Peter Hastings, Stephen Hoadley, Helen Hill and by The Legislative Research Service of the Parliament of Australia. See also The New York Times, 19 October 1974.

Later in 1974 two other political parties were formed, the Klibur Oan Timor Aswain (KOTA) and the Partido Trabalhista (Labour Party). KOTA was a monarchist party which advocated the retention of the régulos or liurais as traditional leaders. The party was reportedly founded by a handful of men who broke away from APODETI when it appeared that Indonesia would not restore the liurais to their traditional positions of power. Both KOTA and the Partido Trabalhista were reported to enjoy minimal support. 35/

Early contacts between East Timor's Political Parties and the Governments of Portugal, Indonesia and Australia

Shortly after the foundation of FRETILIN in May 1974 Mr. José Ramos Horta visited Jakarta where he had talks with the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Adam Malik. According to Mr. Horta he received a written statement from Mr. Malik dated 17 June stating inter alia that "the independence of every country is the right of every nation, with no exception for the people in Timor" and that the Government of Indonesia would strive to maintain good relations with "whoever will govern in Timor in the future after independence". 36/

Mr. Horta followed up his visit to Indonesia with one to Australia in July but reportedly failed to obtain a statement by the Government of Australia supporting the idea of Timorese independence. A second visit in December yielded an Australian reaffirmation of support for "the right to self-determination" of the people of Timor. 37/

APODETI leaders for their part paid frequent visits to Indonesia. In the course of one such visit, Mr. Arnaldo Araújo announced in Jakarta that APODETI had the support of seventy per cent of the people of Timor. 38/

35/ Ibid.

36/ Hastings, op.cit., Helen Hill, op.cit. and Australian Parliament, Legislative Research Service paper, op.cit.

37/ Ibid.

38/ The Indonesian information media subsequently referred to this figure as the basis for their claim that APODETI enjoyed majority support in the colony.

He was also reported to have claimed that he had spent 29 years in prison on a charge of collaborating with the Japanese occupation authorities during the Second World War. 39/ Other APODETI leaders were quoted by the Indonesian media as having come to Jakarta to thank the Indonesian Government for "accepting the aspiration of the majority of Portuguese Timor's people to free themselves from Portuguese rule and merge with Indonesia". 40/ In September 1974 a Jakarta newspaper reported that in the course of a meeting between the Governor of West Timor and APODETI leaders, the provincial government had declared its intention "to assist the struggle of APODETI". 41/

In October 1974 the Portuguese Minister for Interterritorial Coordination, Mr. Almeida Santos, visited East Timor, as well as Australia and Indonesia, for talks concerning the future of East Timor. In the course of his visit to the Territory, Mr. Almeida Santos firmly pledged that "Timor will be what the majority of the people want it to be". 42/ At a news conference in Dili prior to his departure, the Minister summed up the results of his visit to Timor, stating that the continuation of some links with Portugal seemed the only valid solution at that stage. He added that the other possible alternatives - total independence or a merger with Indonesia - seemed impracticable since Timor "was not economically viable" and on the other hand "the supporters of integration with Indonesia were representative only of an infinitesimal section of public opinion". 43/ Later on his return to Lisbon Mr. Santos commenting on the Indonesian position on the Territory's future stated "that the Government of Indonesia only fears premature independence since this might be a source of instability in the area". 44/

39/ "Swara Karya", 11 June 1974 quoted by Helen Hill, op.cit.

40/ Jakarta home service 0700 gmt, 6 November 1974, monitored by BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (SWB) Part 3, No.4740, 7 November 1974.

41/ "Sinar Harapan", 12 September 1974 quoted in Parliament of Australia, Legislative Research Service, op.cit.

42/ A Voz de Timor, Dili, 25 October 1974, quoted by Hastings, op.cit.

43/ Lisbon home service 1900 gmt, 20 October 1974 (SWB, Part 3, FE/4734, 23 October 1974).

44/ Diario de Noticias, Lisbon, 24 October 1974.

Arrival of a new Portuguese Governor and formation of the
UDT/FRETILIN coalition

In November 1974, a new Portuguese Governor, Colonel Mario Lemos Pires, arrived in Dili in succession to Colonel Alves Aldeia who had been appointed in January 1972 by the old régime. Colonel Pires was accompanied by a group of young officers, who like him, were members of the Portuguese Armed Forces Movement (A.F.M.) which had been instrumental in the overthrow of the dictatorship.

Colonel Pires proceeded to attempt to establish an Advisory Government Council with the participation of the three main political parties of Timor. However, the leadership of APODETI refused to participate because of its policy to negotiate solely with Indonesia. Later, FRETILIN declined to participate too on the grounds that some members of the Council had links with the former régime.

Late in January 1975 FRETILIN and UDT, both of which by now were agreed on the issue of independence for the Territory, announced the formation of an alliance and issued a communiqué criticising APODETI for advocating integration with Indonesia and calling for negotiations with Portugal leading to a transitional government and subsequent independence for East Timor. The two parties also stated their desire for good relations with Indonesia after independence. 45/

The formation of the alliance seems to have been prompted mainly by mounting apprehension at what was seen from Dili as increasing Indonesian pressure for integration of the Territory and against independence.

It was for instance reported that the Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik had declared in Jakarta in December 1974 that there were only two options opened to East Timor: union with Indonesia or continuation of Portugal's control. The third option of independence was "not realistic" in view of "the backwardness and economic weakness of the population".

45/ It was reported in this connexion that FRETILIN had rejected approaches from two dissident movements in West Irian and the South Moluccas ("Tempo", Jakarta, 3 May 1975: Interview with José Ramos Horta and Alarico Fernandes; quoted by Helen Hill, op.cit.).

Mr. Malik added that "continuation of Portuguese tutelage would constitute an additional burden for Portugal as well as a new form of colonialism". "Indonesia", he said, "would accept the decision of the people of Portuguese Timor regarding their future including an eventual request for union with Indonesia", but, "we naturally hope that their choice will not disturb peace and security in this area of the world". 46/

During the early part of 1975 a series of Indonesian press and radio reports claimed that a reign of terror prevailed in East Timor and that Timorese favouring integration were being subjected to persecution. 47/ At the same time a radio station near Kupang in West Timor began beaming programmes directed to the Portuguese side of the island. 48/ These reports reached a climax at the end of February following allegations in the Indonesian news media that "leftist groups" had virtually taken over the colony and that the authorities of the Territory had issued a permit to FRETILIN to purchase arms. 49/ Simultaneously an editorial in the The New Standard, a Jakarta newspaper, reportedly sponsored by General Ali Murtopo, President Suharto's security adviser, argued against independence for Portuguese Timor because of the Territory's lack of resources and because an independent Timor would be open to influence by the great Communist powers and undermine regional security. 50/ General Murtopo himself was quoted as saying that Indonesia should be on the alert in the face of the situation prevailing in Timor. 51/ At the same time Mr. Malik stated that the situation

46/ Diario de Noticias, Lisbon, 4 December 1974; Antara Bulletin, 3 December 1974 (quoted in Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirtieth Session, Supplement No. 23 (A/10023/Rev.1), chap.VIII, annex, sect.B.

47/ The Christian Science Monitor, 7 March 1975; Le Monde, 27 February 1975.

48/ "Portuguese Timor - The Independence Movement from Coalition to Conflict", Parliament of Australia, Legislative Research Service, October 1975.

49/ Antara News Agency, 24 January 1975, quoted in The Age (Melbourne), 25 January 1975.

50/ Quoted in The Age (Melbourne), 26 February 1975.

51/ Post Courier (Port Moresby), 5 March 1975 and The Press (Auckland), 4 March 1975.

in the colony was "chaotic" and he gave warning that Indonesia "would not tolerate that situation developing to a dangerous stage". 52/ These and other allegations to the effect that the Portuguese Governor of Timor and a number of newly arrived officers from Portugal were communists were denied by Portuguese officials in the colony. 53/

Concurrent reports of a substantial Indonesian military build-up on the border of Portuguese Timor prompted the Australian Government to state that "it would be seriously concerned if there was to be any unilateral action on the part of Indonesia which could prevent an act of self-determination within Portuguese Timor". 54/ At the beginning of March the Indonesian Security Command announced that Indonesian Timor was out of bounds to all newsmen, both Indonesian and foreign. 55/ Further apprehension was aroused by reports that work had started on a road linking Kupang, the capital of West Timor, with the border, though Indonesian sources dismissed as groundless allegations that the road was part of a plan to invade East Timor. 56/

The crisis appeared to have cooled off by the middle of March following visits to Jakarta by the Governor of Portuguese Timor as well as by the leaders of the UDT and FRETILIN.

52/ The Press (Auckland), 4 March 1975.

53/ Sydney home service 2345 gmt, 4 March 1975, (SWB, Part 3, FE/4847, 6 March 1975).

54/ The Guardian, 26 February 1975.

55/ Melbourne in English for abroad 1700 gmt, 1 March 1975 (SWB, Part 3 FE/4845, 4 March 1975).

56/ Antara in English 1104 gmt, 18 March 1975 (SWB, Part 3, FE/4859, 20 March 1975).

Break-down of the FRETILIN/UDT coalition and the
Macau Conference

In May 1975 the Government of Portugal put forward to the leaders of the three main Timorese political parties a programme for the Territory's decolonization based on the recognition by Portugal of the right of the people of Portuguese Timor to independence, the setting up in October 1975 of a transitional government and of a consultative assembly elected by the local authorities which would decide on the method of election for a constituent assembly.

Talks between the Portuguese Government representative, Major Vitor Alves and the UDT/FRETILIN alliance opened in Dili on 7 May. The talks, in which APODETI refused to join, were eventually adjourned until June. Shortly afterwards the UDT/FRETILIN coalition broke down amid UDT allegations that some AFM officers in Timor were supporting FRETILIN and FRETILIN charges that UDT leaders and, in particular, its Vice President, Cesar Mousinho, had secured during a visit to Jakarta, clandestine Indonesian support in return for future Indonesian influence in East Timorese affairs.

When the decolonization talks resumed in Macau in the middle of June, representatives of UDT and of APODETI were present, but FRETILIN had decided to boycott the talks partly because of the inclusion of APODETI which FRETILIN regarded as an unrepresentative group and also because it regarded the issue of independence as not negotiable.

The Macau talks achieved a measure of agreement among the participants and led to the promulgation in July by the Portuguese Government of Constitutional Law 7/75 which provided for the formation of a Transitional Government to prepare for the election of a Popular Assembly in October 1976. The Transitional Government was to consist of a High Commissioner appointed by Portugal and five members, two of whom would be representatives of the Portuguese Government and the other three chosen from among representatives of the political parties in the Territory. The law also provided for the formation of a Transitional Government Council, an advisory organ composed of two members elected by each regional council and four members nominated by each political party. The Popular Assembly, to be elected by direct, secret and universal suffrage, was to be responsible for determining the future status of the Territory. Portuguese sovereignty would be terminated as of October 1978 unless some other agreement were reached between the Government of Portugal and the Popular Assembly. 57/

57/ Diario do Governo I Série No. 163, 17 July 1975, Lei 7/75.

FRETILIN's reaction to the results of the Macau Conference and to the constitutional law was to insist on its demand that the Portuguese Government immediately declare its intention to grant full independence to East Timor. It also refused to appoint delegates to the Transitional Government and chose instead to intensify its political activities in the interior in preparation for the October 1976 elections. In the meantime the President of UDT, Francisco Xavier Lopes da Cruz was reported to have declared in Jakarta early in July that UDT would agree to the integration of Portuguese Timor with Indonesia if this was the wish of the people of the Territory. 58/ He was also quoted as saying that there was a possibility of cooperation between UDT and APODETI and that private contacts in that direction were already in progress. 59/

Visits by UDT leaders to Jakarta and Kupang multiplied in July and in early August 1975. It was reported that in the course of these visits they had been told by Indonesian officials that Indonesia could not accept the prospect of an independent East Timor unless immediate steps were taken against FRETILIN and an anticommunist front established. 60/ On 6 August 1975 the President of UDT, Mr. Lopes da Cruz reportedly declared in Kupang where he had gone, after a visit to Jakarta, for conversations with the Governor of Indonesian Timor: "We are realists. If we want to be independent we must follow the Indonesian political line. Otherwise it is independence for a week or a month". 61/

58/ Jakarta home service 1500 gmt, 4 July 1975 (SWB, Part 3, No. FE/4949, 8 July 1975).

59/ Indonesian Times, 5 July 1975.

60/ Parliament of Australia, Legislative Research Service, op.cit. 14 October 1975.

61/ The New York Times, 12 August 1975.

IV - From civil war to intervention by Indonesia

The UDT seizure of power and its aftermath

On 11 August 1975 the Democratic Union of Timor (UDT) seized key installations in Dili and Baucau, ^{62/} including the radio station and the airport, and presented an ultimatum to the Portuguese authorities demanding immediate independence and the imprisonment of all the leaders of FRETILIN. The Portuguese Government rejected the ultimatum and called for talks with UDT and FRETILIN. Two days later fighting broke out in Dili and Baucau resulting in scores of casualties and the establishment of UDT control of urban centres. The Portuguese administration failed to intervene, apparently owing to doubts about the loyalty of the local Timorese troops. There were also allegations that the Chief of Police, Maggiolo Gouveia, had connived in the UDT coup. ^{63/}

Shortly thereafter the Portuguese army disintegrated. Timorese soldiers deserted "en masse" taking with them their arms and equipment and going over to the two warring parties with the vast majority reportedly joining FRETILIN. Under the leadership of one of the Timorese officers in the Portuguese army, Lieutenant Rogerio Lobato, a brother of the FRETILIN Vice-President, pro-FRETILIN troops succeeded in capturing the Army headquarters and the munitions depot in Dili. Civil war raged on during the second half of August and early September with UDT forces being increasingly overpowered by FRETILIN's. A month after the UDT action the situation had been entirely reversed. By mid-September FRETILIN had captured Dili and Baucau and controlled most of the Territory. The UDT and APODETI forces collapsed; their leaders were either captured by FRETILIN or fled to Australia or Indonesia. Meanwhile the Governor and the remaining Portuguese military and civilian personnel had withdrawn on 29 August to the nearby island of Ataúro. By the end of September FRETILIN was reported in control of virtually all Portuguese Timor with the exception of the Oecusse enclave and the island of Ataúro.

According to an assessment made by a team of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) which visited East Timor in October 1975, between 2,000 and 3,000 people lost their lives in the civil war, most of them in the area around the central mountain zone. The ACFOA team reckoned that less than 500 persons were killed in Dili itself. At the same time thousands of people, particularly those living in the border areas, crossed the frontier into Indonesian Timor to escape the war.

^{62/} Baucau is the second town in Portuguese Timor and the site of the Territory's only international airport.

^{63/} "Timor - from Coalition to Conflict", Parliament of Australia, Legislative Research Service, October 1975; and S. Hoadley, "Civil War in Timor", op.cit.

Following its military success FRETILIN dropped its previous demand for immediate independence from Portugal and declared itself in favour of a provisional government in 1976, and elections to a constituent assembly to be followed by independence later on.^{64/}

Towards the end of September it was announced by the official Indonesian news agency, Antara, that the leadership of UDT together with that of two small parties KOTA and Trabalhista ^{65/} had formed a coalition on the Indonesian side of Timor called - Movimento Anti-Comunista (MAC). ^{66/} The agency also stated that the President of UDT, Francisco Lopes da Cruz, now favoured integration of East Timor with Indonesia and had called on Indonesia to intervene militarily to end the crisis. Mr. Lopes da Cruz was reported to have expressed his gratitude to the Indonesian Government for accepting his party's petition for the integration of East Timor into Indonesia. ^{67/} This shift in policy by UDT appears to have been opposed by the UDT leadership inside East Timor, including virtually all the prisoners who had been placed under detention by FRETILIN.^{68/}

Initiatives of the government of Portugal

On 22 August 1975 a special Portuguese mission headed by Mr. Almeida Santos, former Minister for Interterritorial Co-ordination, left Lisbon for Timor, Indonesia and Australia, stopping on his way in New York for talks with the United Nations Secretary-General. In the course of Mr. Santos' conversations in Jakarta, the Acting Indonesian Foreign Minister put forward a plan under which Indonesia would send troops to Portuguese Timor as a first step in a multinational peace-keeping force. ^{69/} The Portuguese delegation is said to have balked at this plan, preferring instead the simultaneous

^{64/} Reuters, 8 September 1975.

^{65/} See above page 12.

^{66/} Antara in English 0940 gmt, 23 September 1975 (SWB, Part 3, No. FE/5016, 25 September 1975).

^{67/} Ibid.

^{68/} J. S. Dunn, "The Timor Affair - From Civil War to Invasion by Indonesia", Parliament of Australia, Legislative Research Service, February 1976.

^{69/} The New York Times, 31 August 1975.

arrival of a multinational force composed of troops drawn from Portugal, Indonesia, Malaysia and Australia. The Portuguese proposal in turn received a cool reception from the governments of Malaysia and Australia. In an interview on Australian television, the Prime Minister, Mr. Whitlam, criticized Portugal's handling of the Timor issue stating that East Timor was a Portuguese colony and that Portugal ought to accept responsibility instead of "clearing out and dropping its bundle". 70/

In Canberra a spokesman for the Department of Foreign Affairs said that Australia believed that the only way for an orderly decolonization process was to involve the three main political parties in the territory: APODETI, FRETILIN and UDT and that it would not be proper for Portugal to hand over power to one group in the colony. 71/ For his part the Acting Indonesian Foreign Minister stated that Indonesia would never accept an arrangement solely worked out between Portugal and FRETILIN. 72/ A few days later the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Mr. Adam Malik, was quoted as telling newsmen after meeting Mr. Almeida Santos: "we cannot tolerate the situation there which has developed, harming and endangering us". Asked if this amounted to a warning, Mr. Malik said: "Yes. The first warning. And Portugal should be responsible". 73/

On his return to Lisbon Mr. Almeida Santos proposed a meeting of the colony's three political parties to be held in Macau on 20 September. The meeting failed to materialize owing to a government crisis in Lisbon. Subsequent Portuguese proposals for talks met alternatively with FRETILIN's objections to holding discussions with the two other parties or with the refusal by UDT and APODETI to recognize Portugal as the administering Power over East Timor 74/ and to release, in advance of the talks, the 23 Portuguese soldiers captured by UDT at the time of the fighting in August.

70/ The Guardian, 22 September 1975. This criticism was repeated by the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Andrew Peacock, in the Liberal/Country Party coalition formed in December 1975. Speaking in the Australian Parliament in June 1976 Mr. Peacock said that Portugal "had demonstrated delinquency" as the legal administrative authority of East Timor and "had a great deal to answer for" in not bringing about East Timor to self-determination. (The Australian, 2 June 1976).

71/ Australian Daily News, 9 September 1975.

72/ The Guardian, 9 September 1975.

73/ The Christian Science Monitor, 15 September 1975.

74/ The Financial Times, 30 September 1975.

Faced with this situation the Portuguese Decolonization Commission meeting in Lisbon on 23 September issued a communiqué reaffirming that there was no question of negotiations exclusively with any one of the political associations of Timor, or of any solution which did not respect the will of the people of Timor. It also condemned the continued detention of Portuguese soldiers and civilians by the UDT. 75/

Following a new Portuguese initiative, the Portuguese and Indonesian Foreign Ministers met in Rome from 1 to 3 November 1975 to discuss the situation in Timor. At the conclusion of the talks the two Ministers issued a joint communiqué 76/ noting that "the fundamental responsibility for the decolonization of Portuguese Timor lies with Portugal and that Portugal as the legitimate authority in that Territory engages itself to undertake all efforts towards the speedy and orderly implementation of the act of self-determination by the people of Portuguese Timor". Both Ministers agreed on the need to hold as soon as possible a joint meeting between Portugal and "all political parties in Portuguese Timor simultaneously and aimed at ending armed strife and bringing about a peaceful and orderly implementation of decolonization" of the Territory. The two Ministers concurred that it was essential in carrying out the decolonization of Timor to safeguard "the legitimate interests of the countries of the region, particularly the interests of Indonesia as the closest neighbouring country".

On his return to Lisbon from Rome, Foreign Minister Melo Antunes was quoted as saying that it had been agreed that no Power should intervene in Timor "least of all Indonesia" and that "there should be no pressure by Indonesia on the people of Timor". 77/

In pursuance of the Rome communiqué Portugal's National Decolonization Commission sent a telegram to the presidents of FRETILIN, UDT and APODETI proposing talks between Portugal and representatives of the three political parties to be held in Darwin, Australia between 15 and 20 November, the agenda to include the following items: a) establishment and maintenance of a cease-fire; b) establishment of a mechanism for Timor's transition to self-determination and c) return of the refugees in Indonesian Timor. 78/ According to a communiqué issued by the Decolonization Commission on 29 November 1975 the three parties agreed in principle to the holding of the conference but difficulties arose on the part of UDT and APODETI concerning

75/ The text of the communiqué is reproduced in document A/10277.

76/ Reproduced in document A/C.4/802.

77/ Lisbon home service 2300 gmt, 3 November 1975 (SWB, Part 3, No.5051, 5 November 1975.

78/ Text reproduced in document A/C.4/803.

the date and location.^{79/} The meeting in fact never took place.

The economic and political situation in East Timor between
FRETILIN's victory over UDT and FRETILIN's Declaration of
Independence

The defeat of UDT forces by FRETILIN opened a period of de facto independence in East Timor even though the Portuguese flag continued to be flown in the Territory. Up to mid-November FRETILIN leaders repeatedly declared that they wanted the Portuguese authorities to return to East Timor and to resume the process of decolonization. But in spite of several attempts to promote contacts between FRETILIN and the Portuguese authorities on the island of Ataúro, the impasse between the two was never broken. This seems to have been at least partly due to the personal distrust between FRETILIN leaders and the Portuguese Governor, the former suspecting the Governor of being an accomplice in the UDT coup, the latter smarting from the humiliation of his forced departure from Dili. ^{80/}

According to the reports of those outside observers who visited the Territory during this period, the FRETILIN administration succeeded in re-establishing law and order and in restoring essential services to the towns in spite of the fact that eighty per cent of the members of the former administration had fled.^{81/} Dili was reported as functioning, more or less normally, in mid-October with many of the Chinese shops re-opened. The most serious problem inherited from the month long civil war was apparently a food shortage in some districts aggravated in turn by the limited transport and fuel supplies. Australian relief workers who visited most parts of East Timor in October were reported to have found no evidence of any insecurity or hostility to FRETILIN. According to Mr. J. S. Dunn, former Australian Consul-General in Timor who had frequently visited the colony in the past 15 years, he had never before witnessed such demonstrations of spontaneous warmth and support on the part of the population as greeted FRETILIN leaders wherever they went. ^{82/}

^{79/} See document A/10403 and S/11890.

^{80/} J.S. Dunn, op.cit., Mr. Dunn who was Australian Consul-General in Dili between 1962 and 1964 visited Timor in October 1975 and held conversations with both Colonel Lemos Pires and the leaders of FRETILIN.

^{81/} See Report by the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) team which visited East Timor in October 1975, the paper by Mr. J.S. Dunn mentioned above and the report by two Australian Members of Parliament, Senator Gietzelt and Mr. Ken Fry who visited East Timor in mid-September 1975.

^{82/} J.S. Dunn, op.cit.

Senator Gietzelt and Mr. Ken Fry, both members of the Australian Parliament, who visited the Territory in mid-September, found the territory at peace save for minor border clashes with forces operating from West Timor near Batugade. 83/ In the words of Mr. Fry in his testimony before the United Nations Security Council in April 1976: "we found the FRETILIN administration to be responsible and moderate and it obviously enjoyed strong support from the East Timorese people. The prisoners were being well cared for and it is worth noting that the prisoners included some FRETILIN supporters who had been apprehended for breaches of discipline... Although the FRETILIN administration faced serious supply and economic problems, order had been restored and the people were going back to the villages to tend their crops. The civil war had ended... Like all other Australians who visited Portuguese Timor during this period, I came away full of admiration for the Central Committee of the FRETILIN party. I was tremendously impressed by their moderation, by their integrity and by their intelligence in dealing with a very difficult situation". 84/

According to the report of a team of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) which visited the colony in October the economic disruption was more severe in the towns than in the country. The closure of the country's only bank, the Banco Nacional Ultramarino, had led to a shortage of currency. Public servants could not receive their salaries but they were given sufficient basic foodstuffs to meet the needs of their families. Trading centres with barter replacing currency had been set up. 85/

In the field of agriculture the ACFOA team reported that FRETILIN's programme included bringing about self-sufficiency for the country in terms of food production, and encouraging the formation of agricultural cooperatives at village level. 86/

83/ "Report on Visit to Portuguese East Timor" by Senator Gietzelt and K.L. Fry.

84/ S/PV.1909.

85/ Report on visit to East Timor for the ACFOA Timor Task Force, October 1975. (Australian Council for Overseas Aid, P.O.Box 1562, Canberra, A.C.T.).

86/ Ibid.

The charge often levelled by Indonesia and by other Timorese political parties that FRETILIN was "communist" was disputed by these observers who reported besides a marked "swing to the right" by FRETILIN following its take-over of the Territory. 87/ In remarks before Parliament on 30 September the Australian Prime Minister Mr. Whitlam said that the description of FRETILIN as "communist" was to be deplored since it only hampered the efforts of Portugal and other interested parties in trying to reach a solution to the Timor question in a calm and rational manner. 88/

Throughout this period FRETILIN repeatedly requested foreign governments, particularly those of neighbouring countries, to send observers and fact-finding missions to East Timor to ascertain the situation in the Territory. 89/ Without exception these governments refused on the grounds that Portugal retained sovereignty over East Timor and that any such visit would constitute an unwarranted intervention.

The views quoted above concerning the situation inside East Timor under FRETILIN rule were, however, disputed by Indonesian sources, which reported that the civil war was still in progress in large areas of the Territory and that FRETILIN rule was characterized by a mixture of chaos and terror. 90/ FRETILIN was alleged to have murdered children, looted private property and ordered harsh punishment for those who listened to "anti-communist" radio-stations. 91/ Chinese-owned stores in Dili were said to have been ransacked by FRETILIN forces. 92/ Homes had been raided in search of recruits with the result that many young people had fled Dili and FRETILIN was venting its frustration on the old people left behind. 93/

87/ The Australian journalist Roger East, killed in the fighting in Dili on 8 December was reported as saying that FRETILIN's army was basically anti-colonial, strongly Catholic tinted, and contained many vehement anti-communists in its midst.

88/ Melbourne in English for abroad 1200 gmt, 30 September 1975 (SWB, Part 3, FE/ 5022, 2 October 1975).

89/ See for instance interview of José Ramos Horta, Secretary-General of FRETILIN with Radio Australia. Melbourne in English for abroad 1230 gmt, 28 October 1975 (SWB, Part 3, No. FE/5046, 30 October 1975).

90/ Antara in English 0910 gmt, 10 September 1975 (SWB, Part 3, No. FE/5005/B/5, 12 September 1975)

91/ Ibid. and Jakarta home service 1500 gmt, 30 September 1975 (SWB, Part 3, No. FE/5022, 2 October 1975). and ibid. 1500 gmt, 20 October 1975, (SWB, Part 3, No. FE/5039/B/8, 22 October 1975).

92/ Ibid., 1200 gmt, 24 October 1975 (SWB, Part 3, No. FE/5043, 27 October 1975).

93/ Ibid., 1500 gmt, 27 October 1975 (SWB, Part 3, No. FE/5045, 29 October 1975).