

‘The sun never shone before the Indonesians come’

Or a Hegemony which has Failed: Notes on education from Dili, Baucau and Lospalos

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“... The people of East Timor should not be given the opportunity to receive any education higher than class 4 of primary school, because of they become of educated they certainly will not want to submit any more.” (*Republika*, January 27,28 1993)

During my recent visit to East Timor (ex-Portuguese Timor) in the regency of Baucau I saw a school girls carrying a school bag on which was written in bright colours ‘The sun never shone before the Indonesians came.’ This seem to be one of the methods used to try to draw in the people of East Timor: the population of urban youth jargon, jargon which often does not represent reality. Is it true that conditions in East Timor have changed? Is it true that the people there have accepted integration? Following are my notes from East Timor.

Integration

Following the political crisis in Portugal which began with the military coup in Lisbon on April 25 1975, a political wave swept across East Timor. The political line of the new Portuguese government was decolonization. This promoted the formation of new political parties in East Timor. The three largest parties formed in this critical period were the “Union Demokratica Timorensê” or UDT (Formed on May 11, 1974), the Associaou Popular Demokratica Timorensê or Apodeti (founded on May 27, 1974) and the largest, “Amiciaou Social Demokratica Timorensê (ASDT) which later changed its name to Frente Revolucionaria de Timor-Leste Independente, better known as Fretilin (founded on May 20, 1974). As well as these three, there were also the small parties “Klibur Oan Timor Aswain” or KOTA, and Partido and Trabalhista or Trabalhista. There were ideological different between these parties, and of course as soon as they were formed they began to

compete and to advance their different of visions of societal change in this process of competition of to achieve their different political aims, the different parties engaged in a range of political moves, all designed to further their aims or position. A coalition between UDT and Fretilin aimed and realization of national state, free from Portuguese colonialism. Apodeti a small party, sought to further its political ambitions by advocating a program of integration with the republic of Indonesia. Kota wanted East Timor to become independent under Portuguese-Indonesian-Australian protectorate.

Then Indonesia began to make moves for the occupation and integration of East Timor into its own territory. Under the Balibo declaration of November 28, 3, 1975, Apodeti, UDT¹ and Kota agreed to oppose Fretilin's November 28 1975 proclamation of the Democratic Republic of Timor,² and appointment of Xavier do Amaral as the Republic's first the president. The Balibo declaration greatly accelerated the process of Indonesia intervention in East Timor.

A 'loving and affectionate' approach?

After the majority of Fretilin supporters had been eradicated the opportunity was open for a "non-violent" approach to the management of East Timor by the Indonesia. In 1989 a "loving and affectionate" approach was introduced, with the aim of "embracing" the East Timorese population. Technical personnel were brought from Java, Madura, Bali, Kupang, Flores and other places to 'civilize' the people of East Timor who were said to be 'lazy.'

At the some time, the remnants of Fretilin remained in the mountain. They maintained their position that they had already

¹ On May 27, 1975 UDT put out a communique which unilaterally cancelled its ecalition with Fretilin on August 11, 1975 if carried out the "Movimiento Revolucionario Anti Comunista" (Anti communist Revolutionary Movement). UDT could carry out this action because it had obtained arms from the police force in Dili. UDT followers fortured followers of Fretilin and those followers of Apodeti who were communists. (A.B. Lopian and J.R. Chaniago, *Timor-Timur Dalam Gerak Pembangunan*, Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1988).

² This proclamation was made after Fretilin had successfully hit back at UDT after it staged its "Movimiento." Almost all of the territory of East Timor was under the control of Fretilin at this time.

formed a ‘government’ and had a president.

The people of East Timor themselves still recognized the existence of Fretilin. The labeling of Fretilin as a Security Disturbers’ Movement” (*Gerakan Pengacau Keamanan: GPK*) by the Indonesian government didn’t change the value that the local population put on the group’s political activities. Sympathy towards Fretilin was increased by the fair labour relations they practiced. For example, in a number of places Fretilin opened up rice and corn fields which were worked in cooperation with local people. Their produce would be divided up fairly. In the eyes of the local people, Fretilin were ‘good people.’ They never did anything to harm the population, and never treated them as enemies. This was reflected, for example, during a shoot out which occurred on October 5 1992 in front of the Baucau Regional, General Hospital in the regency of Baucau, when about 50 armed Fretilin militia attempted to free one of their comrades he had been wounded in a skirmish between the military (ABRI) and Fretilin at a shop, and had been taken to the Baucau hospital. Faced with the local military force at the hospital, the Fretilin force chose being harmed. These kind of things make it very easy for Fretilin to achieve the support of the population.

Unlike Fretilin, the military often behaves in a random and arbitrary fashion. In one case, for example, the military killed someone whom they suspected of being a Fretilin member. The corpse was beheaded and the head taken to a village. By this act the soldier armed to show the villager that this is what would be their fate if they become members of sympathizers of Fretilin. However, unsuspected by the soldiers they member but was from that very village. This made the villager go berserk and attack the soldiers. Other acts by the military include the raping of village girls³ or a playing ‘speed king’ by driving truck or jeeps at a great speed through narrow village streets. All of this makes the population have no respect for those who are the spearhead of integration.

Even civil authorities have not yet been prepared to put into practice

³ It seems that up this point there has been little development of localised prostitution—the only such locality is in Dili not from for the beach—in the area know as “Warung Senggol.”

the ‘loving and affectionate’ approach. For example, many school teachers still use violent methods, such as slapping or hitting their student if they make errors. The excuse given by teachers for such actions is that their students can only be disciplined with violence.

This kind of behavior by teacher actually copies the methods used by the military in the maintenance of discipline. For example, even now, in East Timor one can perhaps easily witness the local people showing “great respect” whenever continues because during the early stages of integration the military punished whoever did not show respect.

The ‘loving affection’ approach, which attempted to embrace the people of East Timor, has failed. This failure was caused by the continued use of the ‘loving and affectionate’ approach. A report compiled from statements by eye witnesses and family members and released nine months after the incident, concluded that 273 were killed, 255 were missing and 376 were injured.⁴

This research concluded that the Santa Cruz incident was not accident. This is because in the days which followed it, on the 14th, 15th, 17th and 23rd of November, there occurred a series of massacres of eye witness to the November 12 killings.⁵

At the same time, teachers at junior high school level experience acts of resistance in the day to day behavior of their students. For example some students may not wear their uniforms, although they own them. Others dress untidily, roll up their shirt sleeves very high in the style of tough guys. This kind of attitude is

⁴ East Timor oriental, 12 November 1991, *List of Victims/Liste Des Victimes*, published in French by peace is possible in East Timor Ecumenical Assosiation, Rua De Compalide, 215-4D, 1000 Lisabon, Portugal translated into English as *Santa Cruzs cemetery, 12th November 1991*, subtitled: “Massacres occurring on the 12th and soon after,” eyewitness account of a young man who escaped, “translated by the West Australia Translation service centre. See also: “East Timor, New Santa Cruz, casualty figure: 273 died,” *Tapol Bulletin*, No. 113, October 1992.

⁵ This kind of force and violence definitely has its consequences, it is now possible to find in a range of places in East Timor, great hatred for the army. The soldiers are aware of this hatred and from dusk to morning they evacuate their guard posts.

deliberately intend to have themselves called up before their teachers. Once they have the opportunity to be face to face with their teachers, the students put forward arguments and excuses to defend their behavior. Such meetings are an arena where the students are able to sharpen their debating skills and turn back on themselves the logic of the arguments used by their teachers. Students from junior and senior secondary schools are beginning to search for what they consider to be the most effective form of veiled resistance. They have made the flag raising ceremonies which take place every Monday into another arena for their political activities. For example, when reading out the preamble to the 1945 constitution they emphasize the sentence: "In reality, freedom is the right of all nations..." They mean that, as far as they are concerned, East Timor is not yet free.

Who has taught them to be politically active?

In the discourse of the new order, the answer is clear. "they have been manipulated by the Fretilin GPK." Although this answer perhaps has elements of truth in it ultimately tends to be self justifying. It ignores a range of social problems, which if viewed in a broader perspective, are the real background to the emergence of political consciousness in the local population, and especially amongst students. Political consciousness began to be formed in East Timorese society from the moment the local people began to question the Portuguese presence. From this point the political understanding of the people began to be broadened. They began to see the importance of politics as a media through which to struggle for their liberation from a variety of forms of exploitation. And they began to push back the false consciousness which had been cultivated by their Portuguese rulers. Now they view the presence of the fascist new order regime through the prism of these experiences under the Portuguese. They view Indonesian rule as a new form of colonialism. And furthermore, the presence of the new order in East Timor has been maintained by mass-scale killing.

Right up to the present time the policy of total war continues to be applied in East Timor. For example, 'sweeping' exercises are regularly carried out, there are great numbers of check points (in the 210 km of roads from Dili to Baucau and on to Lospalos Lautem] there are 10 check post) and there is fight surveillance in

public meeting places, especially churches, place of accommodation and restaurants. All of this makes daily life very uncomfortable. Why? Because all of these surveillance activities are carried out the military. The military are the principal target of the Fretilin militia. Being close to the military means running their risk of being hit by story bullet during a Fretilin attack.

Apparently investors also share this feeling of uncomfortable and are reluctant to invest their capital in East Timor. As we know, after the bloody November 12, 1991 incident at Santa Cruz, Dili, the government has invited capitalists to develop East Timor. However up to now it still seems that they lack the courage or are not aware of the economic potential of East Timor's natural resources and so are resultant to invest their money in the province. The resultance of private capital to enter East Timor makes it difficult for the majority of the local people to find non-agricultural employment. It can be said that economic life has stagnated. If can be said that there have been no major economic changes since Portuguese times poverty is spread relatively evenly. The small houses which are a cannot sight through out East Timor usually about 1,5 meters high, 3 to 4 square meters in area, with walls made of wren bamboo or sugar palm and roofs made of corrugated iron or coconut or sugar palm leaves.

Rain is very infrequent. Most of the soil is infertile an dry and is rocky and contains much limestone. This makes it hard to cultivate crops. Around Dili, Manotutu, Baucau, Laga, and towards Lautem, the land is dry and barren. Between Lautem and Lospalos, however, natural conditions are relatively good there is much plant life, including some which from quite thick forests. The air temperature, except in Lospalos, range between 31 and 33 Celsius. To provide themselves with food, East Timorese grow corn and rice in the rainy season.

The arid and infertile natural conditions makes difficult the birth of a local rural bourgeois class through the commodity of agricultural products. There is no process of capitalist development in the villages. This even a working class has not been formed. This obstruct the mobility of the population and the migration from village to town even the towns offer few employment prospects. It is from amongst migrants from other islands that a

traders class in East Timor can be expected to developed. Such migrants' most common form of activities are to open food stalls or small shops selling cheap goods, as well as very small business like boarding houses, transportation, simple handicraft manufacture⁶ and so on. However up to this point this 'private' sector does not absorb much labour. Thus when local people seek work out side of the village/agricultural environment, they tend to turn to government offices (work in the bureaucracy).

It is those who work for the government who seen 'lazy' in comparison to their work mates from outside of East Timor call them 'double agents,' because on the are hand they 'lazy' people rarely go into their offices, sometimes doing so only to collect their wages.

'Half-Hearted' Hegemony

According to the East Timor regional office of the Department of Education and Culture, in 1992 there were 590 primary school with 97.008 students and 477.98 teachers in the province. Also, were 97 junior high school with 38.991 students and 1348 teachers, as well as 31 senior high schools, there were 8 senior economics high schools with 3587 students and 186 teachers, 2 technical High School with 949 students and 71 teachers, 1 Home Economics High School with 289 students and 17 teachers, 1 Social Education with 226 students and 41 teachers, and 1 Agricultural High School with 172 students and 11 teachers. There were also a number of teachers training schools. In 1991 there were listed 3 teachers' Education School 530 students and 74 teachers' training course (with a course for training Junior High School Teachers) with 144 students and 5 teachers. And since the 1985/1986 teaching year the open University has been running in Dili.⁷

⁶ It seems the traditional woven Tais cloth from Dili and basket work from Luqisa can now be traded as souvenirs for tourists. However other local producers find it difficult to compete with product from out side of East Timor. For example, earthenware vessels produced by the "Productive Economic Activities Units, Ceramic Departement, Youth assoutiation of Libor, Manatuto" are unable to compete with similar goods produced in Asongan village, Yogyakarta (see *Republika*, January 27, 1993)

⁷ See *Republika*, January 28, 1993.

Education in East Timor has clearly expanded quantitatively since integration in extraordinary fashion. How about the quality?

In the following section where this question of quality is addressed, it will be argued that education in East Timor has been carried through in half-hearted manner, it can be said that teachers present to their students all the material in the curriculum determined by the central government. However, the capacity of students to absorb this material is very low, may be not even 20%. is absorbed. Why is this so? First, all of material is presented in Indonesian, a 'new' language. Just because students in the third class of junior high school have attained a low level of finance in Indonesia, does not mean that they no longer have any difficulties using this language. Many students even in class 3 if senior high school still have difficulties reading and writing in Indonesian.

If the Indonesian government strongly wishes to seriously develop East Timorese society so that the people there have an 'appropriate' way of thinking, why cannot teachers present their lesson in *Tetun*? (*Tetun* is the local language most used in daily interaction).

Second, there are no books. The is despite the fact that books are the most effective means for communication in East Timor, because other methods such us television, radio and newspapers are all luxury goods. 24 hour electricity supplies are available only on Dili. In other towns, although the cable network is quite adequate, electricity is only available at night and even then not always (towns receive electricity in turns).

The price of newspapers is still too expensive 1000 rupiah per issue for one day old editions. The lack of reading material amongst students who should from the embryo of a critical society makes it possible for them to be engaged in practical political activities. For example many junior and senior high school students made and distributed leaflets and posters in the events surrounding the Santa Cruz incident of November 12, 1991. Teachers acknowledge that their East Timorese students will argue and become angry if they are called ignorant. Even if they cannot follow the material given them in class, because of their practical political activities during the oppose the Indonesia government they feel themselves to be intelligent in both thought and deed. For them, ignorance would

be simply to accept their fate.⁸

Closing Remarks

It is clear that the new order is continuing to hang on to absolute methods of rule in East Timor just as the Dutch applied the politics of *rust en order* (peace and order) in Indonesia during the colonial period. The new order is imposing its hegemony over East Timorese society by means of its 'development' programs, which in essence only aim to produce a comfortable investment climate. The depoliticization of non-East Timorese Indonesian society which has been widely carried out since 1965 has itself only benefited the investment climate. In other words, it has brought the owners of capital to the fore and resulted in the creation of a wide a social gap between rich and poor. Depoliticization represents the retreat of society, and is exactly the opposite to the concept of development for the progress of society.

During my brief visits, it could be seen quite clearly that the majority of the people of East Timor continue to reject integration, at view it in terms of invasion and occupation.

Before we think about what kind of development is appropriate for East Timor in the future, we have to return to the principal problem: is the integration of this territory into the state of Indonesia correct? Would Indonesia be willing to release East Timor if a free referendum was held which rejected integration?

The rejection of forced integration by the people of East Timor has meant that the production process (especially of oil the most abundant natural resource owned by East Timor, contained in the Timor gap) has been stalled. This is because of the continuing prolonged state of war.

What is more, if only the New Order would realize it, up to now East Timor has not contributed anything either to the government treasury or to the pockets of the capitalists. What has happened has been instead the expenditure of huge sums to found the military in the territory. In addition, Indonesia has been under international

⁸ Discussion with several Junior and Senior High School teachers in Baucau and Lospalos, November 1992.

pressure. Fretilin continues to have international campaigners as well as supporters in a number of countries, Australia and Portugal, who work for the liberation of East Timor from Indonesia. As a result the international position of East Timor is still unsettled even in the U.N.⁹

Recently, in the middle of March, Fretelin Militia killed 2 soldiers and 2 Yogyakarta University students (from a students regiment) who were carrying out their term of obligatory rural social work in Lospalos. This occurred while Xanana (the post president/ chairman of the Central Committee of Fretilin) was being tried in an Indonesian court it seems that this action was to prove, once again, that Fretilin is still active. The loss of Xanana has not incapacitated them.

The problem of East Timor at the very last has consequences for the Indonesia' foreign trade with members of the *European Economic Community* (EEC). Portugal is presently the chair of the EEC. This has led this body to apply a number of measures which obstruct the entry of Indonesian commodities into Europe. And this is at a time when the national economy is in a poor state. It is also worth stressing the need to be consistent with the *1945 Constitution* which proclaims the right to independence of other nations. It is also worth remembering the petition advocated by the Indonesian government following a session of the council for political stability and security on October 8, 1974. One point in the statement from this council stated "Indonesia respect the right of the people of Portuguese Timor to determine their own future." Given all of these things, there would be nothing wrong with Indonesia reviewing once more the problems of East Timor.

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⁹ It appears that international support will continue so long as the people of East Timor continue to be able to demonstrate their resistance to Indonesia.