

H of C

HV

HOC.

You now have our thoughts on a theme. Perhaps you would now try a draft to give it flesh? ACB 10/2

## TIMOR

1. Now that the pro-Indonesian forces have apparently sealed off the remaining Fretilin held areas, we are probably moving into a new phase, composed of mopping up on the ground and of UN manoeuvrings over the "act of free choice". The latter may still be difficult, particularly if, as the Australians fear, the mopping up takes a long time. But it is now really too late for the UN to deny that Indonesia and the provisional government control Timor, or to do anything to evict them. This may therefore be an appropriate moment to draft a despatch. If we wait for the final act of incorporation this may take some time and the whole thing will be history. My only qualification is that if Mr Winspeare's report is made soon, we should take it into account in the despatch, although it will really be part of the final act, and not of the preamble or of the phase of direct action. If the addressees of this minute agree, therefore, perhaps H of C would now start to draft with a view to submitting to HE soon after his return from Sulawesi.

A. \*

2. The first phase was the period from the Portuguese revolution up to August 1975. I think that the despatch will have to examine briefly the reasons for the Indonesian Government's decision that they must take over Timor. There is a difference between Timor and Irian Jaya, and the Indonesians could perhaps, as suggested in the first Diah article, have stood aside from an act of decolonisation, even if the result had been a Fretilin government. Surface reasons for deciding otherwise are the dangers of a zone of insecurity and of a left wing government inside the archipelago. Underlying this, however, may well be the fear of separatism within Indonesia. Whatever the reasons, they decided for a take over and, if the Australians are right, they did so long before the events of August. If so they were fortunate that the Macao, and even the subsequent Rome Agreement, was not put into force. Perhaps, however, they hoped that, over a long period of controlled decolonisation, they would have time to swing the political situation inside Timor their way.

3. The second phase started with the UDT coup in August and the Fretilin counter action. This presented the Indonesians with the chance of direct intervention. They let it pass. The reasons were partly a miscalculation of the political situation in Portugal. The Indonesians apparently believed that the Portuguese Government would invite them to intervene unilaterally "to restore order". This would have been tactically ideal, but was never on. Their second reason was a genuine hesitation to be seen to take the law in their own hands.

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4. The first attempted solution, clandestine intervention, was the President's own decision. It was a mistake because it failed. This may yet be reflected in his position and in internal Indonesian politics. But, although it was not their preferred solution, the military cannot escape responsibility for the clandestine policy, since they must have advised the President that undeclared overland intervention from Indonesian Timor would be enough to solve the problem within a reasonable period.

5. By the time of the Fretilin UDI (the reasons for which we should mention) the Indonesians had got themselves into a military, moral and political jam. Clandestine intervention had failed to achieve quick results. If Indonesia had done nothing new, Fretilin would probably have achieved recognition by a significant number of States: All prospect of orderly decolonisation had disappeared. The Indonesians then moved to direct intervention. They had had plenty of time to plan the politics and logistics of this, but both were bungled, perhaps because the President had vetoed discussion and decisions even on a contingency basis until the last moment. The military invasion was badly handled. On the political front the denial that Indonesia had participated in the invasion, except with volunteers; may have been the logical continuation of the clandestine phase; but it was politically inept, not least because it prevented Indonesia from defending itself properly in the UN. It also made the Government, particularly Mr Malik, appear brutal and cynical. The consequences of this for Indonesia's international position have yet to be determined.

B. \*

6. Indonesia had a case for direct intervention. They could have argued that the Portuguese scuttle had left an intolerable situation on their doorstep, from which the main losers would be the East Timorese people, and that they had intervened merely to restore order and to allow the people freely to exercise their right to self determination. This would have been more plausible in August, when there was a genuinely chaotic situation with no party clearly on top. At that time it would have been possible for Indonesia to deny that they were intervening to ensure integration in Indonesia. By December such claims were less convincing. This is a major difference between the present situation in Timor and, for example, in Angola, and is one reason, apart from double standards, why the Indonesians have been censured and the Cubans have not. But, though it would have been easier to admit and defend an Indonesian invasion in August, it would still have been possible in December if it were not for the over-complication of the Javanese mind. Again, the prime responsibility for the political failures of the second phase must rest with the President, while the military shortcomings of the invasion are the fault of the soldiers, though probably not the conventional military establishment.

7. The Western world as a whole and perhaps particularly the Americans and the UK have so far come out of the episode without damage to our interests in South East

Asia. As Dr Kissinger said, Timor is high on the list of subjects in which the US did not want to get involved. We also have kept our heads down. In particular the balance of our policy in the UN Security Council has proved to be about right. The Australians are a different case. As seen from Indonesia, their actions (which will have to be examined in outline in the despatch) have been an example of inconsistent meddling without the power to influence events. They got involved because their relations with Indonesia were important to them. The result has been damage to those relations. For perhaps the first time they have reacted like a great power with direct interests to protect in an overseas situation. Their diplomatic and governmental machine has not been up to it. This is true both of the Whitlam and Fraser Governments.

C.\* 8. We are now in the third phase of the consequences of the Indonesian action. In the real world it is probably both inevitable and understandable that Timor should be incorporated into Indonesia. The Timorese as a whole will not lose by this. The Portuguese had shamefully neglected them. If the Indonesians had achieved the takeover quietly, without damage to their international position and to the UN, most of the world would have been relieved. But their handling of the problem has damaged the regime both internally and externally. On the face of it, they have got what they wanted. But the gain is a negative one - the absorption of a potential trouble spot. Timor will be of little direct use to them. It has already cost them money; for the military operation, for the refugees, and for the cover up. Timor has no resources and will need indefinite subsidies.

9. Internally, the Indonesian man in the street supports the take over, and knows few details of what has been going on (the Indonesian casualty lists for example have not been released). But Timor will affect the balance of power between individuals and the stability of the regime as a whole. Externally Indonesian standing with the third world has been damaged, presumably also with the Communist countries. For the west, Timor is one more reason for doubting the capacity and future stability of the regime. All these consequences will follow even if Timor is now quietly absorbed into Indonesia without fuss and without further affront to the UN. If however the Indonesian Government continue to underestimate the strength of international opinion, or if the mopping-up operation goes badly wrong, the results in terms of internal instability and international disapprobation, could be even more serious.



A C Stuart

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cc: NA  
Mr Muir