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INDONESIA
15 March, 1976**TIMOR: INDONESIA'S RELUCTANT TAKEOVER**

*Her Majesty's Ambassador at Jakarta to the
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*

SUMMARY

With the overthrow of the Caetano régime in Portugal Timor became a potential crisis spot. At first the Indonesians showed little concern but later backed the politicians favouring the Colony's integration with Indonesia (paragraphs 1-3).

2. The Coalition in January 1975 between the UDT (pro-Portuguese) and Fretilin (pro-independence) parties raised for the Indonesians the spectre that the colony might become an independent cockpit for Left-wing anti-Indonesian forces in the area. Strains developed between the Indonesian and Portuguese Governments (paragraphs 4-6).

3. The colony was neither viable economically nor ripe for self-government, and the politicians were unrepresentative of the backward population. In August a pre-emptive UDT *coup* was aborted by Fretilin which took over the territory and forced the Portuguese to flee (paragraphs 7-8).

4. President Suharto decided against overt intervention and favoured a covert take-over through covert military support of the fugitive pro-Indonesian politicians. This failed to work (paragraphs 9-14).

5. Fretilin's Unilateral Declaration of Independence on November 28 caused Indonesia to invade with "volunteers". The operation was poorly handled by both military and politicians, and Indonesia was pilloried in New York. A visitor to Timor by a UN representative found the provisional pro-Indonesian Government firmly in control; and it now looks as if a managed act of self-determination will lead to the territory's final incorporation into Indonesia perhaps in 1977 (paragraphs 15-20).

6. Indonesia has protected her security but at considerable cost. At home the operation has caused bitterness in the army and aggravated the Government's financial problems. Abroad it has at least temporarily damaged Indonesia's image and her relations with the Non-aligned. Her Majesty's Government's low profile pragmatic policy of non-intervention has paid off (paragraphs 21-26).

CONFIDENTIAL

(Confidential)

Jakarta,

15 March, 1976.

Sir,

Less than a month after the *coup* overthrowing the Caetano régime in Portugal, President Spínola on 16 May, 1974, declared that democratic rights would be given to people in Portugal's overseas territories, including East Timor. Now, less than two years from that declaration, events in Timor have assumed international importance, involved a Security Council Resolution and a visit by a special envoy to Timor, bruised Indonesian/Australian relations and caused Indonesia to be censured by many of her friends among the Non-aligned. The present moment while Indonesia consolidates her hold on East Timor and when the UN Security Council is about to discuss the special emissary's report seems a good one in which to review the Timor affair and assess its consequences.

2. In May 1974 crisis was far removed from Timorese minds. On the 28th the Portuguese Governor authorised the establishment of East Timorese political parties and indicated that the people would through a plebiscite to be held in March 1975 have the choice of:

- (a) becoming an autonomous territory in a federation with Portugal;
- (b) becoming an independent State; or
- (c) integrating with Indonesia.

In June, however, he made the personal suggestion that self-determination should be postponed at least five years. Meanwhile in anticipation three political parties had been formed to pursue these choices as follows:

- (a) the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT);
- (b) the Association for a Socialist Democracy of Timor which later became the Revolutionary Front for Timorese Independence (Fretilin); and
- (c) the Association for Timorese integration with Indonesia which later became the Association for a Popular Democracy in Timor (Apodeti).

3. For their part the Indonesians showed little overt sign of concern. Indeed the concept of an Indonesian nation stretching from Sabang in Sumatra to Merauke in West Irian which President Sukarno had raised into a national ideology had never included Portuguese East Timor and no Indonesian claims on it had been made even during the expansionist campaigns for West Irian and against Malaysia; nor indeed had Indonesia any desire to add to her own development tasks the remedying of centuries of Portuguese neglect in Timor. Nevertheless the prospect that East Timor might become an independent State must from the first have aroused in Indonesian minds the spectre that it might get into the wrong hands and form a centre of subversion and of encouragement of insular fissiparous tendencies in the area.

4. During the summer both Ramos Horta, Secretary-General of Fretilin, and Reiz Aroujo, Chairman of Apodeti, visited Jakarta and the former also visited Australia. There he was able to establish useful contacts for the future among the unions, "front" organisations and sympathetic elements in the media. When in September the Portuguese and Indonesian Foreign Ministers met in New York they seem to have agreed amicably to co-operate on the process of decolonisation. A visit to Jakarta the following month by Dr. Santos, the Portuguese Minister for Overseas Territories, also seemed to go well: for his part he apparently admitted that an independent East Timor State was not a realistic concept, while President Suharto emphasised that Indonesia had no territorial ambitions and was opposed to colonialism in all its forms. He significantly added, however, that Indonesia would accept East Timor's integration if this was in line with its

peoples' wishes and provided it became part of the Indonesian unitary State according to the 1945 Constitution; and the evidence suggests that from then on his mind was bent on integration ultimately. To begin with he clearly hoped that this could be achieved by political means, and Lieutenant-General Ali Murtopo seemed to have been given the lead in supporting Apodeti.

5. The decision in January 1975 of UDT and Fretilin to form a Coalition clearly worried the Indonesians. They interpreted it as the initiative of Fretilin and concluded that the danger was increasing that Fretilin would emerge as East Timor's most audible political voice—a prospect which appeared increasingly unwelcome as events in Portugal provided ample evidence of the extreme Left's determination to seize power by force if possible. There were stories of growing Indonesian naval interest in the area, and the Press began to report that pro-Indonesians were being forced to flee East Timor because of Leftist intimidation. While the Indonesian Government maintained that they had no intention to intervene, in March an Indonesian joint forces exercise in Southern Sumatra revealed that the armed forces were engaged on what seemed contingency planning and exercises; and the DFA began to take the line that total independence was not a practicable possibility for the territory: ultimate integration seemed the only choice, but Indonesia would be prepared for Portuguese rule to continue if need be for 10 years while the population was conditioned to accept it. Ali Murtopo subsequently stepped up his efforts to win over the populace and exchange visits were organised among the leadership in Jakarta and Dili. In spite of their blandishments and activities within East Timor however the Indonesians' efforts did not seem to win support for Apodeti. Strains, however, were developing between the UDT and Fretilin and on May 27 UDT broke up the Coalition in protest against Fretilin's undemocratic methods.

6. Strains too were developing between the Indonesian and Portuguese Governments. The latter had in November despatched a new Governor, Colonel Pires, to East Timor accompanied by a staff of young and idealistic Army Majors. They sought to make up for years of colonial neglect and embarked on a crash programme of political education with local elections of village and regional chiefs on the basis of universal suffrage. Mindful of what Majors were doing in Lisbon the Indonesians viewed these activities with suspicion but sought as far as possible to keep events in Timor under the direct control of the two Governments. In February Ali Murtopo visited Lisbon secretly and had further exchanges in London in March with Dr. Santos. Later in May Major Vitor Alves, Portugal's roving Ambassador, visited Jakarta and saw Ali Murtopo. As a result of these exchanges the Indonesians concluded that Portugal accepted that the future of Timor should be handled as a bilateral matter and were therefore somewhat shocked when the Portuguese arranged a Constitutional Conference in Macao from 26–28 June. Although they let the Indonesians have advance sight of their proposals for the future of the territory they did not consult them: and the Indonesians felt that they had been somewhat double-crossed when the Portuguese proposed elections in late 1976 for a Popular Constituent Assembly (instead of a consultative body with fewer constitutional implications) to decide the territory's future and lead to the end of Portuguese rule some time in 1978. Fretilin refused to attend the Macao Conference and thus openly indicated its contempt for consensus politics and collaboration with the other parties; and the conference did nothing to dispel the underlying tension revealed in the increasingly strident Indonesian Press reporting about Fretilin's behaviour.

7. When in July I sent my Head of Chancery to visit the territory his impressions made gloomy reading. It was clear that, whatever their sense of

mission then might be, the Portuguese had left themselves too little time. The territory had been too backward for too long to be able quickly to develop any genuine democracy, and its diverse ethnic groups with their inexperienced politicians and political parties provided fertile soil for passionate rivalry and disruptive tensions; moreover the privileged ranks of the Timorese soldiery anxious to retain their status and higher living standards lurked in the wings as obvious successors to the Portuguese Administration. The chances of unrest and of a military *coup* thus then were rated high. How rightly so soon became apparent on 11 August, when the UDT staged a *coup d'état*.

8. Exactly what happened has never been revealed. But the evidence submitted to the Security Council in December suggested that the UDT became increasingly concerned about the Portuguese Government's blind eye towards Fretilin's illegal activities and about two of the Majors' activity in arming its followers. Expecting that this presaged an armed take-over UDT apparently launched a pre-emptive *coup* and captured the Dili military headquarters. Through the connivance or neglect of the Portuguese Fretilin, who were apparently backed by many of the military units outside Dili, were later handed the Portuguese stock of some 20,000 rifles and 80 per cent of the heavy ammunition in the colony. Thus armed the Fretilin supporters easily overthrew the UDT, seized Dili and rapidly extended their control over the rest of the territory. The Governor seems to have made little attempt to influence events but concentrated on rescuing the Portuguese, finally withdrawing to the off-shore island Atauro on 27 August. For their part the Portuguese Government seemed only too willing to wash their hands of the situation in the face of their own problems in Lisbon. Their Foreign Minister wrote to the UN Secretary-General to alert the UN to the gravity of the situation and requested his good offices in securing humanitarian aid. Dr. Santos went to New York to float vague suggestions for a UN mission, though he never actually formally proposed one. When visiting Jakarta, Canberra and Atauro in late August and early September he continued to be vague and evasive; and though he gave the Indonesian Government the impression that it would be asked on his return to Lisbon to restore law and order the invitation was not issued.

9. Faced with such a rapid denouement the Indonesians could not make up their minds what to do. On 15 August General Yoga Sugama (Head of BAKIN the Indonesian Intelligence Co-ordination Body) told friendly Ambassadors that Indonesia would intervene if there was a breakdown in security which threatened Indonesia, an indication that Russia would recognise a separate Timor Government or signs of Indonesian dissidents from Sulawesi, Papua or Ambon getting involved. Mindful of India's successes in Goa and Sikkim, the hawks in the army and BAKIM would have liked to have intervened at once to restore order and overthrow the Fretilin régime before it had had time to consolidate. The need to evacuate the Indonesian Consul-General from Dili by naval vessel on 29 August gave them their chance, but the Government did not take it. This may have been partly due to lack of adequate preparations and doubt about its ability to secure a quick success; but the voices of the doves were stronger.

10. The previous September during Prime Minister Whitlam's visit to Indonesia, Timor was a major topic in discussions. Mr. Whitlam had then expressed the view that an independent Timor would be an unviable State and a potential threat to the stability of the area; and that the most realistic solution might well be association with Indonesia if this was internationally acceptable. For his part President Suharto had said that he wanted to avoid the possibility that international opinion would accuse Indonesia of aggrandizement or meddling in another country's preserve. Both had agreed that it was important that

self-determination should be the guiding principle for Timor's future. Apparently Mr. Whitlam's sympathy for the idea of Timor's association was not shared by his Foreign Minister or by the Australian Permanent-Under-Secretary Mr. Renouf; and over the months the Australian Government's attitude revealed a schizophrenia which was aggravated by the determination of the Opposition's spokesman for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Peacock, to capitalise on anti-Indonesian sentiment in Australia; and he openly criticised the Government for encouraging an Indonesian take-over. In February Mr. Muldoon, leader of the New Zealand Opposition, had also said that his party would be gravely concerned if Portuguese Timor became a fully independent country under the influence of any Great Power for this would upset the strategic balance of the area and his party would see it as a threat to the whole region. He added that the New Zealand Government shared his view. In March, however, the New Zealand Government had warned the Indonesians against intervention and the Indonesians had replied that they had no intentions of taking precipitate action.

11. In setting his face against overt intervention President Suharto was thus being true to the line he had hitherto consistently maintained. In support of this he had many motives too: emotionally he regarded himself the antithesis of his predecessor, Sukarno, and was most anxious not to be tarred with his reputation as an aggrandist nor did he wish to rock the ASEAN boat and excite Malaysian suspicions that further territorial ambitions of Indonesia might extend to Northern Kalimantan; mindful of the US Congress's reaction to Turkey's intervention in Cyprus he had no wish to risk the military aid he was getting from the States, nor did he want to risk the other aid received from Australia and the IGGI countries; his Government's No. 1 priority was the successful completion of the Second Five-year Plan and a good showing for the Government in the elections of May 1977; lastly, he had no wish for costly military adventures and the assumption of a further burden in supporting East Timor when his Government was already reeling from the consequences of the Pertamina crisis. Ever a cautious man, he thus had ample grounds for caution then. At the same time in the face of the obvious dangers of inaction and under pressure from hawks among the Generals he must have decided that Indonesia could not simply let things take their course.

12. In this situation, in a typically Javanese reaction, he looked for a middle way. On the strength largely of advice from Lieutenant-General Ali Murtopo of BAKIN and Major-General Beni Moerdani, Chief of Army Intelligence, he appears to have decided that anti-Fretilin forces inside Timor and among the refugees could be stiffened with money and training and "volunteers" to provide a resistance sufficient at least to show that Fretilin was not the undisputed master of Timor and to leave open the way to a political solution. One or two attempts took place by infiltrating the refugees across the Timor border. They got nowhere. Increasingly, Indonesian troops were used clandestinely to stiffen the Timorese guerrillas or to replace them under the anti-Fretilin banner. In one of these actions on 15-16 October five journalists from Australia (two of them British by birth) were killed at Balibo near the border when reporting on the fighting from the Fretilin side. There are conflicting accounts of their deaths. The most damaging is that they were deliberately killed to prevent disclosure of the presence of Indonesian troops; but it seems more probable that they died accidentally in cross-fire when the house in which they were sheltered was mortared.

13. Thus what started as help to the Timorese to help themselves increasingly became direct, though clandestine, intervention by the Indonesian Army. The army personnel were hampered from the start by trying to pretend that they were

Timorese guerrillas. This prevented the use of sea power to land troops in the north coast close to Dili, and condemned those fighting to a laborious advance from the Indonesian border in the west, along atrocious roads and in increasingly unfavourable weather. To maintain the fiction that the army was not involved, there was at first no regular budget for the operation, which had to be paid for from ordinary defence funds. The training of Indonesian forces proved defective and Fretilin resistance unexpectedly strong. By the end of November, the clandestine operation had failed to achieve any quick success. To make matters worse some 30-50,000 refugees had placed an intolerable burden on the West Timor Government and increased the strains on Indonesia's coffers. The President, as the leading dove, was becoming dangerously isolated and speculation was growing in Jakarta about his continued ability to resist the pressures for open intervention. Even the Malaysians voiced concern at the slowness with which the problem was being resolved.

14. One more attempt at a political solution was launched at the beginning of November when the Foreign Minister engaged in further talks with the Portuguese in Rome. While he put the best face possible on their agreement that the involvement of the UN would be "premature and inopportune", the results in fact were inconclusive. Portugal made no determined effort to get the three Timorese parties together and it seemed as if the only result was to leave the Indonesians impaled more firmly than ever on their dilemma.

15. Fretilin's Unilateral Declaration of Independence on 28 November, resolved this for them. Events in Angola had indicated only too clearly what could happen if a Left-wing group secured foreign recognition and support from outside Powers (and the hostile Viet-Nameese Government had ample arms to send to Fretilin), the struggle for power in Lisbon had not yet removed the risk of a takeover by the extreme Left; while the interregnum in Australia pending the elections meant that the Australians would hardly be able to react too strongly (moreover a secret friendly message from Mr. Fraser had given reason to believe that a Liberal and Country Party Government, if elected, would prove more helpful). The President was apparently reassured by his Generals that intervention would be swift and effective and by the Foreign Minister that he would safeguard Indonesia's position at the UN. He therefore decided to use whatever force was necessary rapidly to dislodge Fretilin. On 7 December the day after President Ford completed his one-day visit to Jakarta, the Indonesians invaded Timor in a wave of sea and air attacks on Dili.

16. They appear to have acted with more than usual incompetence. On the military side the operations could never have been easy because of the cloud and rain; but they were badly bungled. The full story has not yet come out; but it would seem that there was inadequate co-ordination between the air and land-borne forces with the result that they shot each other up. Attacks were launched without regard to known intelligence about Fretilin strong points, and heavy casualties were needlessly incurred. Officers' control over their troops failed in the heat of battle, and some of the crack units ran amok, looting, raping and even killing some of the UDT supporters. Logistics broke down because of failure of planning and execution in the higher echelons, and even the supply of food and ammunition to the front line troops seems to have collapsed at times with the result that the armed forces failed to secure the main towns quickly and many of the Fretilin forces succeeded in escaping to continue guerrilla warfare in the hills. It was not until 17 December that the pro-Indonesian parties in Dili formed a Provisional Government; and only by 9 January was the situation quiet enough

for Mr. Malik to visit Dili. However by 10 days later the Indonesians seemed to have had effective control over the urban areas and the Fretilin leaders were unable to produce any area in their hands for the UN Representative to visit.

17. On the political side the bungling was even worse. On the precedent of China's intervention in North Korea, and perhaps as a hangover from the earlier phase of clandestine intervention, Mr. Malik and the DFA persisted in the hollow pretence that military intervention was by volunteers. Unfortunately Mr. Malik's main activity is travel; and neither he nor his senior officials have any idea how to direct his Ministry in pursuit of the Government's long-term objectives, nor because of his Communist past and tendency to speak too much first and think afterwards does he enjoy the full confidence of the Generals who here call the tune. As a result no attempt was made throughout the autumn months to combat Fretilin's propaganda or publicise the Indonesian case and the intolerable burden which the refugees in Eastern Timor were representing. Nor after Fretilin's Unilateral Declaration was any thought apparently given to sending out special emissaries to Indonesia's friends among the Non-aligned if possible to secure their support or at least neutralise their opposition to Indonesia's intervention.

18. As a result Indonesia's wicket at New York was totally unprepared and was needlessly made stickier by the Indonesians' pretences over volunteers. These deceived no one, and Mr. Malik's lack of sensitivity and the feeling particularly among the Non-aligned that they had been double-crossed by Indonesia led to the Indonesians getting a rougher time than perhaps they really deserved. Discussions first began in the Fourth Committee on 8 December and were continued in the General Assembly when on 12 December a resolution was discussed deploring Indonesia's military intervention, calling for its immediate cessation and drawing the Security Council's attention to the situation. This was passed overwhelmingly by 72-10 (with Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Philippines, Malaysia, India, Japan, Benin and Iran alone supporting Indonesia) and with 43 abstentions (including the Nine). Discussion in the Security Council began on 15 December and, thanks largely to the skilful work of Mr. Richard in the chair (for which the Indonesians afterwards expressed appreciation) this led to the unanimous adoption of a constructive resolution on 22 December. While this echoed the General Assembly's deploring of Indonesia's armed intervention it also regretted the Portuguese Government's failure to discharge its responsibilities as administering power in East Timor. It also *inter alia* called upon the Government of Indonesia to withdraw its forces, and requested the Secretary-General to send urgently a special representative to East Timor to make an on-the-spot assessment of the situation and to submit recommendations. Indonesia was shocked to find how many of her Non-aligned friends deserted her in New York. Though most of ASEAN had rallied to her support, Singapore, who abstained did not. Nor did Australia, who voted against her. Public comment in Jakarta was momentarily bitter, but the Government put the best cynical face possible on the situation.

19. By the time the UN Representative (Mr. Winspeare Guicciardi) had been chosen, briefed and got to Indonesia the army had the situation sufficiently under control in Timor. With his travel ostensibly in the hands of the Provisional Government Mr. Winspeare was able to move freely in the northern towns but was not permitted to visit the south where the Provisional Government said it could not guarantee his safety. He subsequently said that he saw limited evidence only of an Indonesian presence in Timor, that damage in Dili seemed minor, and that the Provisional Government seemed well established in the towns he visited. On his return to Jakarta on 23 January he expressed a wish to visit areas still

held by Fretilin and sought to do so from Darwin where radio communication was for a time established with Fretilin. In the event, however, Fretilin proved unable to work out arrangements for a visit because of their lack of adequate control over territory and landing places. At the time of writing it looks as if Mr. Waldheim will submit an interim report to the Security Council covering Mr. Winspeare's account of his own findings. These seem likely to portray the situation in East Timor in terms relatively favourable to the Provisional Government and Indonesia and the Secretary-General is expected to recommend further consultations between Mr. Winspeare and representatives of the Portuguese and Indonesian Governments and East Timorese political parties.

20. Preliminary indications are that the Indonesians will go along with this provided that the representatives of the Provisional Government are not asked to sit round the same table as fugitive representatives of Fretilin; and with some form of act of self-determination in which the UN plays some observing role. Their tactics have not yet been decided, but it looks as if they may seek to play the matter long and postpone the act until the spring of 1977 in the hope that that would remove the subject both from the agenda of the Colombo meeting of the Non-aligned in August and this year's autumn General Assembly. They may also hope that by 1977 the issue will have become stale history and thus no longer a source of international embarrassment.

21. Meanwhile it is perhaps not too soon to assess the consequences of Indonesia's intervention. From the security point of view Indonesia seems to have got what she wanted. Although the danger of East Timor as a centre of intrigue against her had never been an actuality, events in Angola and the known hostility of the Viet-Nameese and North Koreans and their potential for trouble-making had made the risk a very real one. To have allowed the danger to become a reality and then to have acted would have been a more dangerous and costly course—and Indonesia could hardly have allowed a centre of subversion to exist so close to the heart of her archipelago. Yet the cost was high.

22. The conduct of the operations and the troops involved have damaged the *amour propre* of the army and embittered the fighting troops against their superiors up the line. Apart from lives (and we may never know the true casualty figures which may run into hundreds) the cost in money and material has been formidable; and already there has been talk of the army's training funds having to be cut by 80 per cent, while prospects of much needed general re-equipment must further have receded. There is likely to be much tooth sucking and discussion of what went wrong, and some careers seem certain to be ruined. The leading hawk, the Minister of Defence, General Panggabean, however, is probably due to retire anyway before long because of ill-health; and his Deputy, General Surono, seems to have sided early in the autumn with the doves and thereafter to have kept his head down and clear of the Timor operation (in December he ostentatiously went on the *Haj!*). As he is popular with the younger officers and generally well thought of he should be able to ensure that scapegoat hunting does not get out of hand. Some of the blame for the poor control of operations might rightly have been attached to the President for having instituted no proper command structure but left control of the operations uneasily divided between the army's area commanders and Generals Moerdani and Ali Murtopo; but the traditionally loyal Javanese do not yet seem to have drawn that conclusion. The President seems not to be being blamed; though ugly stories about supplies being jeopardised by corruption up the line will have increased the general disillusionment with the President's lack of control on that score.

23. Abroad the operation may have been less damaging than the voting in New York would have suggested. Though Indonesia has in the spirit of the Bandung Conference identified herself with the Non-aligned, her Government's political philosophy has since 1965 been out of tune with most of theirs; their voting at New York should not therefore be regarded as having changed any basic relationships. With the exception of Singapore her ASEAN Allies stuck by her, and it seems that the recent ASEAN Conference at Bali succeeded in burying any ill will that Singapore's vote initially created. In the Western world the Indonesians certainly in the short-term damaged their public image and gave the extreme Left another stick to beat them with; but Timor is far from Europe and the States, and events there never really captured the attention of a public more concerned about what was going on in Lisbon and Angola.

24. In the Communist world Indonesia had little to lose but, probably because of the Sino-Soviet rivalry in South-East Asia, seems to have come out of the crisis better than might have been expected. Mindful of their desire to rebuild their influence in Indonesia after the disastrous *coup* of 1965 (and perhaps incidentally also because of their investment in brand new Embassy buildings in Jakarta) the Russians seem to have decided from the beginning that nothing they could do would prevent Indonesia from taking over East Timor; they therefore kept as low a profile as was compatible with not developing an open breach with the Viet-Nameese and North Korean Governments; and their opposition seemed more for the record than for effect. The same has hitherto seemed to apply to Peking (for different reasons: the Chinese may see in ASEAN some potential bulwark against Soviet encroachment and therefore may not want to rock its boat too much).

25. You, Sir, decided that East Timor was an area in which Britain was no longer directly involved and that Britain's interests indicated a low profile and avoidance as far as possible of being dragged into the dispute. Dr. Kissinger did likewise. This policy has so far paid off handsomely. The lack of involvement has largely kept events in Timor out of the British and US headlines and away from becoming a major public issue. It was a pity that because of geography and public interest in this area the Australian Government could not follow suit, in spite of the energetic efforts of its Ambassador to persuade it to do so. The Australian and New Zealand Governments share much blame for the extent to which their people's emotions were aroused: both Governments had by early last year recognised the potential dangers of the situation in Timor, but the Australians in particular lacked the political guts to stay out or to intervene effectively; in August both might have persuaded the Portuguese to set up some form of joint body to help restore order and administer a programme of orderly decolonisation acceptable to Indonesia.

26. In the UN Indonesia was pilloried and, even if the effects on the Government's foreign relations are not long-lasting, the humiliation may well cause Mr. Malik and some of his top advisers to become the scapegoats. Further evidence was provided of the double standards all too often found at Turtle Bay. If the UN magnified a local trouble spot to one of international dimensions, the Winspeare mission does seem largely to have defused the situation. If the crisis has any lesson for posterity that is the difficulty of developing some acceptable and practicable concept of international law and morals. Morals and the law do not always go hand in hand. Self-determination is a laudable principle, but it may not always be morally right to grant it (the US Civil War was fought to prevent the south from exercising this right, and most States would deny it to minorities within their borders wishing to secede); and the mass of the politically illiterate

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East Timorese probably wanted nothing so much as to be left in peace and allowed to get on with their own lives with the minimum of interference from outside. Non-interference in neighbours' territories is also laudable; but events suggest that in the world in which we live an independent economically unviable East Timor could not have avoided becoming a battleground for the region's warring ideologies. Yet no State can publicly endorse the right to interfere without for example seeming to endorse the Brezhnev doctrine or condoning Guatemalan pretensions over Belize. In the circumstances Britain's pragmatic approach to foreign policy seems as wise as ever.

27. I am sending copies of this despatch to the UK Permanent Representative to the UN and to Her Majesty's Representatives in Washington, Canberra, Wellington, Lisbon, Moscow, Peking and the ASEAN capitals and to the UK Permanent Representative at Geneva.

I have, etc.,

J. A. FORD.

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