

Good Times for East Timor?

by Warwick Fry

The new 'caretaker' Prime Minister of East Timor, Jose Ramos Horta is revealing the tactical diplomacy that earned him a Nobel Peace prize. In a move to de-escalate violence in East Timor he met with the managers of Timorese Martial Arts clubs. Dr Ramos-Horta told them: "... find a way to live peacefully ... contribute to peace and stability in this country, or ... leave and continue your stupid, irresponsible and criminal behaviour. If you continue this violent behaviour, let me assure you that none of you will go unpunished." It was agreed that a three-member squad from each Martial Arts Club be on a 'rapid-response' call to defuse violent incidents in which Martial Arts club members are often involved.

The former Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri is also back in the country, exonerated of accusations (based on a now discredited Australian 'Four Corners' Television story) that he was arming 'hit squads' to eliminate political opposition figures. These allegations led to his resignation in July. In early November the Australian media interpreted a trip he made to Portugal (for medical treatment) as an attempt to avoid confronting the allegations. However he was back within ten days, and is now meeting weekly with the current Prime Minister, Jose Ramos Horta, in a consultative role, to lend his experience and Prime Ministerial knowledge.

The vilification of Alkatiri is now emerging as another piece of evidence of a deliberate campaign of destabilisation of East Timor, in which the Australian government is deeply implicated. The destabilisation campaign has now been officially recognised by the Fretilin Central Committee. On October 29 this year Fretilin released a report detailing the four-year campaign of disinformation and destabilisation.

In an exclusive interview with 2NimFM, Peter Murphy

of the SEARCH foundation teased out the dynamics of the current situation in East Timor. (The SEARCH Foundation is an independent research and non-governmental aid organisation (NGO) which has been running a number of aid projects in East Timor for many years.) Peter Murphy has been involved with East Timor since the Indonesian invasion in 1975, and came up with conclusions very similar to those of the Fretilin Central Committee. He was moreover able to mention specific examples, and incidents indicating Australian involvement in this campaign.

Peter traces the destabilisation campaign back to two minority parties unhappy with their poor showing in the elections of 2001. (The former 'governor' of Indonesian occupied East Timor led one of these parties.) By 2002 elements from within the Catholic Church had become involved, with the Catholic Radio Station referring to PM Alkatiri as a 'Moslem dog' and calling on supporters to 'eliminate' him. (Alkatiri's house was burned down at the time). In 2005 members of the Church were already calling for the resignation of the government and the reinstatement of the former Governor of East Timor as Prime Minister. One of the demands was that 2.5% of oil revenues should go to the Church!

The small protests and demonstrations (albeit with a violent component) of 2005 were escalated this year by the addition of new players. A corrupt military official was passed over for promotion when he was busted over a 'beer for sandalwood' smuggling



operation. According to Peter Murphy no aggrieved soldier has yet come forward yet to the UN commission set up to investigate claims that there was discrimination within the ranks of the Timorese military.

This alleged discrimination was the pretext for a strike by several hundred soldiers in May this year, led by Major Reynado. While the mutinous troops left Dili to hide out in the countryside, Reynado was the trigger for the street gangs to come out and renew the violence of 2005 on an escalated scale.

Peter Murphy questioned the role of Australia in this stage of destabilisation. Reynado, he says, was trained at the Australian Staff College, where 'he has many barrackers', and his wife is the manager of the Peace Corps in the US Embassy. "They are both extremely well connected" he said; and ... "I think that it was more external forces; people in Australia, the US and probably Indonesia who put unbearable pressure on Xanana to move against Alkatiri." Peter was critical of the role of the Four Corners documentary that raised the unfounded allegations of Alkatiri setting up a 'hit squad'. This was used directly to demand the resignation of the PM. Peter suggested; "... you have to ask yourself who was behind all that? You have to ask yourself about Four Corners, who put them in touch with (rebel soldier) Raylos, ... I think you'll find that there was someone there, in the US Embassy, or maybe the Australian Embassy ..." A complete sound file of this interview can be played or downloaded

at: <<http://del.icio.us/nimbinradio/latinradical>> or, for a direct link to the file: <<http://media.libsyn.com/media/nimbinradiomedia/PeterMurphyPressed.mp3>>

Meanwhile, the document of the Fretilin Central Committee published last October is critical of the fact that the results of the UN commission into the violence of May and June this year have not been publicised, and that it has omitted some of the more important details. The Fretilin Central Committee also predicts the next phase of the campaign of destabilisation:

"We believe that a "Plan B" could now be set into motion. Such plan would involve, on the one hand, more selective terrorist activities. And, on the other hand, a careful and more extensive use of measures in the realm of politics, administration, the economy and the judiciary with a view to undermining even further the authority of the State, beheading the Nation by getting rid of its historical leadership, stirring up communities to provoke a widespread reaction and to bring about an atmosphere of generalized social and political unrest. Under such circumstances, Timor-Leste could be declared a failed state and that would warrant a more forceful and extensive intervention ..."

While generations X, Y, and beyond, became aware of the East Timor issue in 1999 when East Timor succeeded in her bid for independence from Indonesia, a movement for independence, led by the Fretilin, has existed since 1975 and the first Indonesian intervention. Parties and individuals who lost the 1975 elections to the Fretilin, armed the police and created a two week situation that was viewed as a 'civil war'. This was the excuse for intervention. It bears observable parallels to the current crisis. It comes as a surprise to some Australians that Prime Minister Jose Ramos Horta celebrated the 35th anniversary of East Timorese Independence this month, while younger Australians thought it was only the 7th anniversary!



Thambaddai school rebuilding progress

Thambaddai GTMS is a Primary and Secondary grade school with classes from Grades 1-10 (O Level). The school has 12 teachers and 241 students, 140 male and 101 female.

One of dozens of Sri Lankan schools completely destroyed during the Boxing Day Tsunami two years ago, it was selected for its similarities to Nimbin Central as a focus for fundraising by the Nimbin Bowling Club, beginning on New Year's Eve, 2004.

Total fundraising amounted to \$4000 by mid-2005, and this amount was transferred to the re-building project co-ordinators, Rotary Sri Lanka, to be used to help supply furniture for the completed buildings.

Two years down the track, Rotary's monthly progress report notes, "Work progressing at a fair pace but still way behind schedule." Between February and August 2006, it reported "Work pace is very slow and not acceptable," or "Construction work is virtually at a standstill."

By 30th June, the Contractor was issued with an ultimatum



to produce workable schedule and deliver or face cancellation, and a new Site Manager and plan were in operation by September.

The next three months were productive, with concrete slabs, blockwork, roof beams and plastering well advanced in the Admin Building, Primary Classroom Block, Secondary Classroom Block, Aesthetic Unit and Library Building. In October, our Library furniture was delivered to the site, and by November the Library roof was finished, and the walls 60% plastered.

Total funds spent so far are \$A190,148 out of a total reconstruction budget of \$A320,640. Work is expected to continue steadily until the Sri Lankan holiday for their New Year observance, 8th to 20th April.

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