

A Short Review

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by Richard W. Franke

On November 25, 1975, one of the last of Portugal's colonial territories declared itself the independent Democratic Republic of East Timor. On December 7, 1975, 4,000-6,000 Indonesian troops landed in the capital of the country. So began a major military and political struggle that continues to this day as a nation of 950,000 people resist the forced annexation and incorporation into a nation of 130 million. Despite massive supplies of United States military equipment on their side, the Indonesians have run into two difficult obstacles: the tortuously rugged terrain of an island that has fascinated geographers for the past two centuries, and the solid will and political organization of a people who had been written off by many observers and politicians as not likely to care too much one way or the other about who was governing them.

As this devastating war drags on—with recurring reports of military and civilian deaths running from 60,000 to 120,000—a virtual news blackout is maintained in most Western countries, while a small number of academic, political, and human rights people have attempted to keep the question of East Timor before at least some section of U.S. and world public opinion. Fighting inside a total naval and information blockade maintained by the vastly superior Indonesian forces, East Timor's people have not had much of their story told to people on the outside.

In this situation, it is a welcome event that Jill Jolliffe, an Australian journalist and political science graduate of Monash University, has provided a detailed, documented account of the East Timorese nationalist struggle and the various Indonesian and Western intrigues, maneuvers, massacres, and deals to thwart it.

East Timor—Nationalism and Colonialism brings together historical research, interviews and newspaper accounts, and the author's own eye-witness experiences in East Timor during the brief interlude between the end of fascist rule in Portugal in April of 1974 and the full-scale Indonesian invasion of December 1975. Jolliffe's two visits to East Timor during this period gave her both invaluable observations and a sympathy for the right of the East Timorese to independence. Her account of East Timor from the earliest available travelers' reports to the various letters smuggled out from under Indonesian guns has a moderate tone that makes the book a useful introduction for readers who are not already aware of and opposed to U.S. and Australian imperialism and the role of Indonesia's current military leaders in its promotion in South-east Asia.

EAST TIMOR—NATIONALISM AND COLONIALISM, by Jill Jolliffe. Queensland, Australia: Queensland University Press, 1978. Available in the USA from: Queensland University Press, 5 South Union Street, Lawrence, MA 01843. HB \$21.75, PB \$12.00. 343pp., maps, documents, index.

Indeed, Jolliffe offers relatively little analysis or commentary on the events she describes, preferring to recount them in simple, but never dry, journalistic prose. In successive chapters we are given a brief overview of East Timor's traditional cultures and early history, a somewhat lengthier account of Portuguese rule, and several highly detailed and fascinating chapters on the events of the period from April 1974 to late 1978. The straightforward chronicle of events will disappoint some who might wish that the topic were analyzed more fully, but for most readers, especially in the U.S., the events recorded through Jolliffe's writing speak so clearly for themselves as to stimulate possible further interest in East Timor.

One of the strongest sections of the book is a set of documented incidents testifying to the authenticity of FRETILIN, the Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor, as an effective and rapidly improving *de facto* administration from August to December 1975, when Portuguese troops and government officials had "retreated" to an island across from the capital city of Dili. Another is Jolliffe's account of the cynical maneuvers of the Portuguese, Australian, and Indonesian governments in preparing, attempting to carry out, and sanctifying the dismemberment and destruction of a nation whose only conceivable threat to Indonesia lies in the positive example which its progressive social programs would offer as an alternative to the multinational corporate bonanza which Jakarta's generals have created at great cost to the economic and social well-being of the majority of Indonesians.

Jolliffe tells, for example, of the organized, fair, and efficient distribution of the one Australian relief shipment of food in Maubisse, a mountain village far from the capital, in November of 1975, attesting to FRETILIN's control over and support from local rural people. She notes as well the positive impressions of the situation made on Australian sailors who worked at the Dili docks with East Timorese to unload the relief cargo (pp. 189-196 with several photographs). And Jolliffe points to a hitherto little-known aspect of the final FRETILIN decision to declare a unilateral independence. Even before the major attack of December 1975 there were several border incursions in the preceding two months and

The soldiers at the front had been pressing for independence for some time. They wanted to fight as defenders of an independent country: if East Timorese were to die fighting for their homeland, they should die as free and independent people, they averred. (216)

Against this popular sentiment, which Jolliffe documents throughout the study as an outcome of a long-developing nationalist feeling in East Timor, was arrayed a set of powerful neighbors and their overseas allies. The Western plotting behind the backs of East Timor's people is surely among the most blatant in recent times, though by no means unique. Jolliffe records, for example, the characterization by journalist Peter Hastings of Australian Prime Minister Whitlam's 1975 meeting with Indonesian president Suharto several months before the invasion. "Uninvited, he practically gave East Timor to Indonesia (quoted on p. 86).

She goes on to list in page after dismal page the several government distortions, misrepresentations, contradictory statements, and other diplomatic devices by which Australia's leaders helped to hand over what they apparently thought would be complete control of the island to Indonesia (232-262). They even went so far as to ban the sale of gasoline to East Timor during the 3 months of the FRETILIN administration on the grounds that it might be used for military purposes—all the while granting millions of dollars of military aid to Indonesia with obvious knowledge as to its eventual use.

Then there was the Australian refusal to open a consulate, the Portuguese avoidance of numerous FRETILIN attempts to arrange a Portuguese-sponsored decolonization, and secret meetings between the Portuguese and Indonesian governments that greatly aided the political aspect of the Indonesian maneuvers.

The tragedy and the horror that has befallen the East Timorese people in areas under Indonesian control is recounted in a moving introductory chapter in which vignettes of many of the FRETILIN leaders are set against the stark outcome of "integration" into present-day Indonesia:

Rosa Muki Bonaparte returned to Timor from her studies in Portugal early in 1975. She came back enthused with ideas and quickly established herself in the leadership structure of FRETILIN. She participated in talks initiated by the Portuguese Decolonization Commission in Dili in May 1975. Small, intense, very Timorese, the Portuguese had called her "the petite revolutionary" and "Rosa Luxemburg" for her contribution to the talks. When she resisted the Indonesians she was shot on the wharf and her body thrown into the harbor. (5)

Finally, Jolliffe's study adds material on the real feelings that have motivated and sustained the incredible resistance to such an overwhelming military force: the intense and committed nationalism of the East Timorese. While Jolliffe may give too little analytical significance to the differences among the three main political parties in East Timor before the invasion, often seeming to characterize them as equally nationalist, she undoubtedly catches the deepest sentiments of the everyday people who shoulder the burden of the resistance even now:

A Timorese in the remote interior village of Namoleco expressed . . . [the meaning of their nationalism] . . . in a more articulate and real fashion than any political theorists . . . could: "We are not buffalos or potatoes or mice to be sold to the Indonesians," he told visiting journalists. "We are Timorese and this is our country." (91) ☆

Bibliography: East Timor

by Richard W. Franke and Arnold S. Kohen

The following bibliography is intended to provide readers of Jolliffe's book with starting points for further study. Several references to the Portuguese literature on East Timor are also given in Jolliffe's extensive footnotes.

I. Geography, History, Ethnography

- Abilio de Araujo* and Bob Reece, *Timorese Elites* (ed. by Jill Jolliffe). Canberra, 1975.
- C. R. Boxer, *The Topasses of Timor*. Amsterdam. Koninklijke Vereeniging Indisch Instituut, 1947.
- C. R. Boxer, "Portuguese Timor: A Rough Island Story: 1515-1960," in *History Today*, Vol. 10 (1960), pp. 349-355.
- Shepard Foreman, "Spirits of the Makassae" in *Natural History*, Vol. 85 (1976), No. 9, pp. 12ff.
- David Hicks, *Tetum Ghosts and Kin*. Palo Alto: Mayfield, 1976.
- F. J. Ormeling, *The Timor Problem: A Geographical Interpretation of an Underdeveloped Island*. The Hague: J. B. Wolters (2nd edition), 1957.
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II. Independence, the Indonesian Invasion, and the East Timorese Resistance Struggle.

- Elaine Capizzi, Helen Hill, and Dave Marcy, "Fretilin and the Struggle for Independence in East Timor" in *Race and Class*. Vol. 17 (1976), No. 4.
- Noam Chomsky, "East Timor: The Press Cover-up" in *Inquiry Magazine*, February 19, 1979, pp. 9-15. (Reprints available from East Timor Research Project, 410 Stewart Ave., Ithaca, N.Y. 14850, \$.50 each.)
- Noam Chomsky and Ed Herman, "East Timor—Genocide on the Sly" in Chomsky and Herman, *The Pentagon-CIA Archipelago: The "Washington Connection" and Third World Fascism*. Boston: South End Press, 1979 (Box 68, Astor Station, Boston, MA 02123). (This essay appears in this issue of the *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*.)
- Grant Evans, "Portuguese Timor" in *New Left Review*, No. 91 (1975), pp. 67-79.
- Richard W. Franke,* *East Timor: The Hidden War*. New York: East Timor Defense Committee, 1976.
- Denis Freney,* *Timor: Freedom Caught Between the Powers*. Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1975.
- Helen Hill, *The Timor Story*. Fitzroy, Australia: Timor Information Service, 1975. (Available from Timor Information Service, 183 Gertrude St., Fitzroy, Victoria, 3065, Australia.)

Short Reviews

by Susan Lewandowski

As the title implies, the central theme of this book is the role of colonialism in western India. The author argues that colonialism encouraged certain castes to rise to a position of dominance in society by creating an atmosphere that fostered polarized and competing groups. Dr. Omvedt's geographical focus is the state of Maharashtra during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when the Brahmin elites who responded to western education and new occupations in the bureaucracy moved into positions of status and authority based on a colonial model of society. Beneath them in the indigenous social hierarchy remained the non-Brahmins or Untouchables who were not granted the same opportunities for advancement,

... particularly as upper class members of excluded groups began to gain the goals of representation . . . in higher positions, the democratizing function of their demands became increasingly less relevant than the fact that their emphasis on an ethnic or nationalist identity could mask the process of elite competition and ethnic group conflict which forestalled a mass assault on elite privilege in general. (31)

Gail Omvedt, CULTURAL REVOLT IN A COLONIAL SOCIETY: THE NON-BRAHMIN MOVEMENT IN WESTERN INDIA, 1873-1930. Bombay: Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976.

In addressing this central theme, the book begins with an Introduction that stresses the historical importance of the non-Brahmin movement in India. In Chapter II Omvedt discusses colonialism and explores Leninist theories of colonialism. An attempt is made to define the various classes which emerged under colonial impetus, and which are new to the colonized areas of the world. This discussion highlights the growth of "sub-elites" in colonial society which compete (as in the case of the non-Brahmins) with groups who were often the dominant traditional elites in society (i.e., the Brahmin caste). Chapters III-V turn inward in an attempt to provide background on (1) the caste system as it has traditionally existed in India, (2) the historical setting of the Maharashtrian people, and (3) the growth of a class structure in western India during the period from 1818 to 1931. Chapters VI-VII explore both the Brahmin and non-Brahmin ideology of social reform and revolution. Here Omvedt focuses on the approaches of two non-Brahmin leaders: Jotirao Phule (1827-) who belonged to the Mali or gardener caste, and whose father was a flower shop owner in Poona; and Shahu Chhatrapati, the Maharaja of Kolhapur (1874-1922) who claimed descent from Shivaji, the famous Maratha leader of the seventeenth century. Phule developed an ideology that stressed the non-Aryan ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity of the non-Brahmin Maharashtrian. This ideology ap-

Arnold S. Kohen, "U.S. Diplomacy and Human Rights: The Cruel Case of Indonesia" in *The Nation*, November 26, 1977. (Reprints available from East Timor Research Project, 410 Stewart Ave., Ithaca, N.Y. 14850, \$.25 each.)

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U.S. Congress, *Overviews and Indonesia*. Ibid., February 15, 1978.

U.S. Congress, *Foreign Assistance Legislation for Fiscal Year 1979*. Ibid., Part 4.

Donald E. Weatherbee, "Portuguese Timor: An Indonesian Dilemma," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 6 (1966), p. 688.

*Starred items are available from the East Timor Defense Committee, P.O. Box 251, Old Chelsea Station, N.Y., N.Y. 10011.

III. United Nations Documents

Some of the more important U.N. debates and presentations are included in the following:

Decolonization Issue on East Timor. New York: United Nations Department of Political Affairs, Trusteeship, and Decolonization, No. 7 (1976), Document No. 76-36495.

The Situation in Timor. New York: United Nations Security Council Debate, April 12, 1976, Document No. S/PV. 1908. (Includes statements by Fretilin Representative José Ramos Horta and Indonesia Provisional Government Representative Guilherme Goncalves.)

The Situation in Timor. New York: *ibid.*, April 14, 1976, Document No. S/PV. 1909. (Includes statements by Indonesian U.N. Representative Anwar Sani, Australian Labor Party Senator Ken Fry, and pro-Indonesian Australian citizen Mr. Rex Sydell.)

East Timor: Working Paper Prepared by the Secretariat. New York: United Nations General Assembly, Document No. A/33/23, October 23, 1978.

Question of East Timor. New York: United Nations Fourth Committee, Document No. A/C.4/33/SR.21, November 22, 1978. (Includes statement by Fretilin Central Committee Representative Abilio de Araújo.)

Question of East Timor. New York: United Nations Fourth Committee, Document No. A/C.4/33/SR.30, December 7, 1978. (Includes statement by Professor Noam Chomsky.)
