

Indonesia will not yield to 'anti-Indonesia' campaign

by Mary M. Burdman

Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas was in Bonn, Germany Feb. 29, on the last stop of an international tour to present Indonesia's perception of what happened on Nov. 12, 1991, when soldiers of the Indonesian Army fired on anti-Indonesian demonstrators in Dili, East Timor, killing at least 50 people. Another 90 people were wounded, and some 91 are still missing. Alatas described the events as "very regrettable and tragic."

He has visited Japan, France, Great Britain, the United States, and Germany to counter what he termed the "anti-Indonesia campaign" being waged in the media and by international groups with Portugal's backing. Besides conveying Indonesia's view of the history of East Timor and the current tensions there, he also presented what Jakarta is doing to prevent the recurrence of such killings. He stressed that provocations are still being waged on behalf of the Fretilin, the separatist movement whose members are Portuguese-trained and supported, and that these will be countered by his government.

East Timor is one half of an island in the Indonesian archipelago, which was carved up by the Dutch and Portuguese colonialists. The Portuguese ruled East Timor for 450 years; when they finally pulled out in 1975, civil war broke out. In 1976, after discussions between the Indonesian and Portuguese foreign ministers failed to resolve the crisis, East Timor was integrated into Indonesia.

Alatas's tour was also intended to brief parliaments and media on East Timor. In Bonn, he stated that the "very tragic" shootings in Dili were clearly *not* ordered by, and did not reflect the policy of, the government of Indonesia or its armed forces. President Suharto called the shootings in Dili a tragedy, to be deeply regretted. The incident was a serious setback to efforts to end the strife and economic backwardness of East Timor, and find a solution to the "East Timor question" in the U.N. acceptable to both Indonesia and Portugal.

But also regrettable, Alatas stated, was the misrepresentation of what happened in Dili by some foreign media immediately after the demonstration and shootings. Contrary to these early press reports, the demonstration—which was permitted by the authorities—was turned "from the outside by agitators into a wild, disorderly, and at times destructive demonstration." Days and weeks of planning, he said, had

gone into creating premeditated provocations. Two security personnel were stabbed by demonstrators. This does not justify the killings, he said, but gives some perspective on what happened.

Indonesian government's actions

On Nov. 18, the government appointed a National Commission of Inquiry, headed by a Supreme Court judge, which released an advance report on its findings on Dec. 26. The full report will be issued soon. The report stated, Alatas said, that the shooting by security personnel was "excessive," and that there was careless handling of casualties. It also refuted earlier versions of the number of deaths given out by the local authorities. There were 50 killed, not 19 as first announced, and the figures of both wounded and missing were also higher than originally stated.

Two days later, President Suharto exhorted both the nation of Indonesia and the local government in East Timor to take what had happened as an opportunity for self-correction and introspection. It should never have happened; it should never happen again, he said. A Military Council of Honor was convened by the Chief of Staff, for only the second time in Indonesia's history. Legal action must be taken against those who violated the law, the President said, and the missing must be found. On Feb. 27, six high-ranking Army officers responsible for East Timor, including two generals, were sacked.

One of the major causes of unrest is the lack of economic development, which is being exploited by those opposed to integration, Alatas said. East Timor was extremely backward in 1974. Indonesia has in the past 16 years built more asphalt roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, health centers, public markets, and places of worship than were built in the entire 450 years of Portuguese rule. East Timor is now connected to the world by air and sea, and integrated into the Indonesian national telephone and television network. Yet severe problems remain. Although many more East Timorese are now receiving university-level education and training than they did under the colonialists, they cannot be absorbed in the labor market in East Timor. When demonstrations began 18 months ago, the demands were for jobs and investment in East Timor. Indonesia has for the past year accelerated the

development of East Timor, and this will be intensified, Alatas said.

The colonial heritage

Looking at East Timor from the point of view of a nation like Indonesia, which had to fight for its national independence 50 years ago, all the hoopla in the press about "human rights violations" and "illegal occupation" is suddenly seen right side out. At the end of World War II, the British, under the command of Lord Mountbatten, used both Indian troops and as many formerly occupying Japanese troops as they could muster, to attempt to stop the Indonesian nationalists trying to free their country, and to *bring back* the defeated Dutch colonists. They did not succeed for long. It is notable that the Netherlands is one of the very few countries which imposed a ban on new aid to Indonesia after the Dili shootings.

The Portuguese colonists have created some of the worst disasters of the post-imperial world. Why are the Portuguese so disturbed about East Timor? It is clear, stated Alatas: This time, their "boys" lost. In the two former Portuguese colonies in Africa, Angola and Mozambique, the Portuguese pulled out of both countries as civil war broke out—and civil war still rages today. In East Timor, civil war began in August 1975—and the Portuguese left.

In a statement at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. on Feb. 20, Alatas said of the Fretilin (Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor) that it "opted for independence [from Indonesia], although it had never opposed, let alone participated in the the struggle against Portuguese colonialism. In fact the Fretilin has always played exactly the opposite role, that of a favorite collaborator of the colonial administration." It is a "mélange of . . . a small group of young radicals, and . . . the worst elements of Portuguese colonial army." The Fretilin is still being "sustained under the protective custody of Portugal." The Fretilin launched a campaign of terrorism and assassinations, especially against the Apodeti party, "which had waged the persistent struggle against the Portuguese colonists," for which many of their leaders were imprisoned, exiled, or executed. Apodeti had opted for integration with Indonesia, to achieve reunification of the island of Timor.

Portugal "clandestinely turn[ed] over its arms and munitions to the Fretilin," and then, at the height of the civil war, which killed 3,000 people and sent 42,000 refugees into West Timor, "the then-governor of East Timor and his staff simply packed up and left." Indonesia *begged* Portugal to return and stabilize the situation, but Portugal did nothing. On Nov. 30, 1975, the other parties called for the independence of East Timor through integration with Indonesia, and by June 1976, a request for integration was presented to the Indonesian government.

Talks between Indonesia and Portugal were again conducted in 1983. "If it comes to a showdown, we have the

documents" of these discussions with Portugal, not only from 1983, but also from 1974, Alatas stated. "Some nations should not stand on pedestals on human rights."

The next phase of the anti-Indonesia campaign involves a Portuguese ferry boat, the *Lusitania Expresso*, which sailed from Lisbon in February to pick up a group of 100 "students and journalists" in Australia, to sail to Dili. The group's intention is "expressly and explicitly to *force* its way into Indonesian territory," Alatas said. "From statements of the group's organizers, Indonesia cannot but view the boat as a provocation." It is a "politically motivated attempt" to intensify the turmoil and cause another incident, to be used against Indonesia abroad. The boat's passengers have been notified in advance that Indonesia will *not* allow the ship to enter its waters.

Human rights and national rights

The view of human rights in developing countries, and in Asia, is very different from that being promoted in the West, Alatas stated. As a lawyer, he said, he knows that western views of human rights are based on Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Locke, and Thomas Hobbes. In Asia, social relationships developed differently; harmony and consensus, the rights of society, are viewed as just as important as individual rights, he said.

If you read the U.N. Charter, human rights are an issue to be treated in the context of "international cooperation" between states—not confrontation, Alatas said. It is *not* an issue in which one state can stand in judgment on another, as the sole tribunal. All rights—civil and political, economic, social, and cultural—are indivisible; you cannot pick and choose certain "rights" in assessing the record of a nation on human rights. In developing countries, the lack of development makes social and economic rights very important. The most fundamental rights are universal, but in implementation in a national context, there must be room for national competence. This is not the Indonesian position, stated Alatas; it is the U.N. position.

He cited the 1977 General Assembly Resolution 32/130 on "Alternative Approaches and Ways and Means Within the U.N. System for Improving the Effective Enjoyment of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms." This resolution states that international cooperation on human rights "should be based on a profound understanding of the variety of problems existing in different societies and on the full respect for their economic, social, and cultural realities." The resolution is based on the recognition that "colonialism, foreign domination and occupation, aggression and threats against national sovereignty and national unity and territorial integrity, as well as the refusal to recognize the fundamental rights of all peoples to self-determination and of every nation to exercise full sovereignty over its natural wealth and resources, constitute situations which in themselves are and generate mass and flagrant violations of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of peoples as well as individuals."