

East Timor: Another ‘October Surprise’?

Indonesia has been added to the list of nations targetted for elimination of its national sovereignty. Michael and Gail Billington report.

Sept. 17: The United States deploys a guided-missile carrier and three amphibious ships offshore, carrying more than 2,000 Marines.

Sept. 18: Six hundred U.S. Marines are deployed ashore to two areas adjacent to the border. U.S. officials claim it is for “humanitarian purposes.”

Sept. 19: U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen threatens to drastically expand already-existing sanctions, if U.S. and UN demands are not met.

Sept. 20: UN peacekeeping troops on the border are given orders to shoot to kill, without warning, any armed suspect. Previously, rules of engagement required shouted warnings and shots in the air before killing anyone who had not themselves fired on UN troops.

What country is this? Iraq, perhaps, or Yugoslavia, the so-called “rogue nations,” which have been subjected to Anglo-American unilateral warfare over the past years, and are top prospects for an “October Surprise” military action to prop up the election hopes of Wall Street’s George W. Bush or Al Gore? No, it is Indonesia, the world’s fourth-most populous nation, battling to survive after three years of International Monetary Fund (IMF)-dictated looting by speculators and foreign banks, while trying to hold itself together with a newly elected government against ethnic, religious, and separatist ferment which has been aggravated by growing poverty.

With the pre-programmed unfolding disaster of East Timor as the excuse, the “world’s only superpower” has added Indonesia to the list of nations eligible for the unilateral breach of sovereignty—economic, political, and military—by the British-American-Commonwealth (BAC) financial oligarchy, which has become their common practice.

A ‘Messy State’

One cheerleader for this London-Wall Street cartel, Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times*, on Oct. 4 declared Indonesia to be a “messy state,” a newly coined term, joining “rogue state” and “failed state,” as categories which, when applied by the likes of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, or the *New York Times*, serve to justify unilateral intervention by the world’s self-appointed defenders of “democracy.” A “messy state,” says Friedman, is one “too big to fail, but too messy to work”

as a nation-state, therefore, by implication, requiring that its sovereignty must be relinquished in deference to “international interests.” Ominously, Friedman includes Russia, Pakistan, and China in this “messy state” category as well.

The context of the assault on Indonesia has less to do with East Timor, or even the much-publicized murder of three UN workers in West Timor (East Nusa Tenggara), by an enraged mob of East Timorese refugees on Sept. 6, than it does with the rapidly unfolding collapse of the international financial system. As the past year’s hyperinflation in the “new economy” asset bubble flows out into oil, metals, real estate, and other commodity prices, nations around the world are increasingly refusing to accept the IMF’s “Washington Consensus” of subservience to free-market globalization at the expense of their real economies and the welfare of their populations. To enforce their will over economic and political policy, the BAC oligarchy is instigating crisis, and planning intervention, in every corner of the world, including Indonesia.

Indonesia is also viewed by the City of London and Wall Street as the vulnerable spot in the newly strengthened alliance of the ten nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), with China, Japan, and South Korea, known as “ASEAN-Plus-3.” ASEAN-Plus-3 issued a joint declaration in Chiang Mai, Thailand on May 6, setting in motion concerted efforts to create an Asian-wide monetary defense mechanism against international speculation, and an Asian Monetary Fund to generate real development in spite of the IMF. While the IMF publicly voices its approval of the Chiang Mai declaration, the financial oligarchy correctly fears that such regional measures will undermine IMF control, while serving as the seed-crystal for a new world monetary system to replace the bankrupt IMF-centered system altogether. Taking advantage of the instability of this transition period in Indonesia, by provoking multiple crises, serves their purpose.

Secretary of Defense Cohen, who flew into Jakarta on Sept. 18 to issue his threat of new sanctions, also visited other Southeast Asian nations, demanding that they prepare to intervene, together with the United States, in Indonesia or other potential “peacekeeping” or “humanitarian” crises. His proposal for multilateral military cooperation, which he calls the Asia-Pacific Regional Initiative, is precisely the same policy



Australian peacekeeping forces in Dili, East Timor, September 1999, under a UN mandate. The proposals to beef up UN peacekeeping operations amount to a renewed assault on the nation-state by the British-steered financier oligarchy.

demanded by the United States in Ibero-America, aimed at breaking up moves toward unity there, by promoting joint military operations, under U.S. direction, against any nation which promotes such unity or resists IMF dictates—such as Peru under President Alberto Fujimori (see *EIR*, Sept. 29, 2000).

Most ASEAN nations, recognizing that such arrangements would compromise sovereignty, and could be used to justify Western intervention into the region, have resisted these proposals. Malaysia, whose Prime Minister Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad has provided the vital leadership in rejecting IMF dictates in favor of the sovereign defense of the economic welfare of its citizens, has also refused to participate in Cohen's scheme. China has also kept its distance from U.S. overtures to join such multilateral military arrangements involving the United States.

A Textbook Case

The East Timor situation is a textbook case of a programmed point of crisis designed to justify intervention. A brief review of its history demonstrates the lies by commission and omission in nearly all press and official reports in the West.

Former colonial power Portugal, whose abysmal record of occupation was characterized in a 1973 UN report calling it possibly the worst among all former colonial powers, held its East Timor enclave in a state of abject poverty and ignorance for over 450 years. Also in 1973, the World Health Organization described East Timor as one of the worst places in the world to live. Suddenly, in April 1975, after a leftist military junta came to power in Lisbon, Portugal chose to rid

itself of East Timor, literally deserting under cover of night, but not before distributing its arsenal of far more sophisticated weapons than locally home-made fare or World War II-vintage arms to both sides, but overwhelmingly to the radical Marxist Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretelin).

Four months later, in August 1975, the Portuguese military abandoned East Timor, and in another three months, November 1975, Portugal declared itself the administrative power in the former colony, an incredibly hubristic claim, which the United Nations has recognized, right up to the Aug. 30, 1999 referendum. Two days after Fretelin declared the formation of the Democratic Republic of East Timor (D.R.E.T.) on Nov. 28, 1975, the pro-integration with Indonesia coalition issued its "Balibo Declaration," announcing the integration of East Timor with Indonesia. On Dec. 7, 1975, the pro-integration coalition, backed by the Indonesian military, took control of the capital city of Dili, and on July 17, 1976, Indonesian President Suharto signed the law that established East Timor as the 27th province of the Republic of Indonesia.

In one of the few honest statements about East Timor in these past months, Australia's Ambassador to Indonesia during 1975-78, Richard Woolcott, defended Australia's support for Indonesia's 1975 takeover in East Timor, in a commentary in the *Jakarta Post* on Sept. 20, 2000. Woolcott wrote: "Given the irresponsible actions of Portugal and Fretelin, the impatience of Indonesia, and the support for incorporation on the part of major and regional powers, the 'pragmatic' acknowledgment that incorporation had become inevitable in the second half of 1975 was the right and practical policy for Australia to adopt. . . . The other countries of

ASEAN, then still in its formative stages as a regional organization, were urging Indonesia not to permit the emergence of an unstable mini-state in Southeast Asia.”

In January 1999, the Howard administration in Australia did an about-face on Indonesia’s incorporation of East Timor, urging then-President B.J. Habibie to sponsor a referendum on autonomy in the province. In September 1999, Prime Minister John Howard’s Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, commented on the devastation wrought in capital Dili, by pro-integrationists enraged by the outcome of that referendum, by comparing the Dili landscape to that of Phnom Penh, Cambodia in April 1975, after the genocidal Khmer Rouge had forcibly evacuated the entire population.

The comparison was more appropriate than Downer may have known. The Sept. 22, 1999 *Phnom Penh Post* reported that the only countries that recognized the Democratic Republic of East Timor were Pol Pot’s Democratic Kampuchea, and fellow former Portuguese colonies Mozambique, Angola, Guinea Bissau, and Cape Verde—the latter all prodigies of the particularly bloody school of revolution at Dar Es Salaam University in Tanzania. Subsequently, the Documentation Center of Cambodia uncovered evidence that the Khmer Rouge trained a delegation from the Democratic Republic of East Timor for a year, beginning in 1976. Ngo Pin, a translator in the Democratic Kampuchea Foreign Ministry at the time, told the *Phnom Penh Post* that Ieng Sary organized courses “to teach the East Timor students the art of revolution. . . . The cadre were taught how to fight with guerrilla tactics.” A letter from then-D.R.E.T. military commander Rogerio Lobato to KR Deputy Prime Minister Ieng Sary reads in part, “The one-year period of visit and stay of the three of us in the Democratic Kampuchea, together with the precious knowledge we have gained, renders great significance for the revolutionary resistance in East Timor.” Lobato, however, was subsequently discredited when he was caught smuggling diamonds in Mozambique.

In East Timor, Fretelin retreated into the jungles, to wage terror attacks on military and government officials. The Indonesian Army was advised and encouraged by the United States and Britain to adopt the “strategic hamlet” approach, which failed so miserably for the United States in Vietnam. Indonesia used strong measures to impose order, and, by their own admission, over the years, was guilty of several episodes of brutal and illegal repression of civilian supporters of independence—for which a number of military officers were tried and convicted in Indonesian courts. Both sides relied on local militias to secure and defend territory.

Despite the severe Indonesian Army repression, the combination of government-sponsored economic development and the criminal prosecution of those guilty of abuses against the political opposition, brought the situation into relative peace during the mid-1990s, although human rights organizations financed by London and Wall Street maintained a constant flow of diatribes against Indonesia’s control of the prov-

ince. Indeed, on the international front, the cause of East Timor’s independence has been championed by the three former colonial powers in Indonesia—Britain, Portugal, and the Netherlands—and by an extensive network of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which has flourished since the Reagan-Bush Administration in the early 1980s began the process of “privatizing” government policy-making through the National Endowment for Democracy, and its Democratic and Republican siblings, the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute. These, in turn, have spawned like-minded institutions in western Europe and key British Commonwealth countries, Canada and Australia.

Indonesia spent \$892 million to build essential social and physical infrastructure to make East Timor humanly habitable, and continued to spend an estimated \$100 million per year on the province, but the UN refused to recognize Indonesia’s jurisdiction over East Timor, preferring the ambiguity created by Portugal’s dubious claim as the administrative power, without paying the price of upkeep.

Nonetheless, the Indonesian government made extraordinary progress in alleviating the poverty and backwardness left behind by colonial Portugal. A brief comparison of East Timor in 1976 to 1996 makes the point: From 1976, the 20 kilometers (12.5 miles) of paved roads, all within the capital of Dili, increased to 1,645 kilometers (1,022 miles) of asphalt roads throughout the province. The number of schools serving a population of 625,000 grew from 47 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, 1 high school, and no colleges, to 30 kindergartens, 684 elementary, 109 junior high, and 54 senior high schools, and four colleges, serving the population of 843,100. In terms of health care, the number of hospitals and clinics increased from 2 hospitals and 14 clinics with 3 doctors and 2 dentists in 1974, to 11 hospitals and 332 village health centers, staffed by 221 physicians, 172 general practitioners, 5 specialists, and 40 dentists, assisted by more than 1,500 paramedics in 1996, most of which increase was accomplished during 1991-96. At the time of integration, 90% of the population were illiterate; by 1996, illiteracy had been reduced to an estimated 18.75%.

Asia’s Economic Crash

Then, in 1997, the global speculators and the IMF laid waste to the Indonesian economy (and the rest of the ASEAN economies as well), stealing billions, and driving the population back into poverty, after 30 years of significant economic improvement. In this crisis, old ethnic, religious, and separatist tensions were easily rekindled. The IMF orchestrated the removal of President Suharto (a fact that many Western officials, including the IMF, openly admit today), and then applied maximum pressure on his successor, Habibie, to set up a referendum in East Timor to vote to “accept” or “reject” greater autonomy *within* Indonesia. Australian Prime Minister Howard’s January 1999 letter to President Habibie was

the *coup de grâce*, reversing Australia's support for Indonesia's integration policy, the only country in the world to have endorsed Indonesia's incorporation of East Timor. President Habibie, initially enraged, eventually agreed to set up a vote.

Then the "international community" went to work. UN agencies, openly favoring the pro-independence forces, were sent to organize the election process. Huge amounts of money were promised to the East Timorese if they voted for independence. Former colonial power Portugal alone pledged an estimated \$3 million! With the domestic economy in shambles, and with promises of a new paradise coming from the world powers and the UN, the vote, not surprisingly, was a landslide for change. Also not surprisingly, the human rights mafia made no complaints about neo-colonial powers "buying" the election.

The murderous rampage by pro-Indonesian militias and certain elements of the military is well known. Trials of some of those responsible are now in preparation in Jakarta, while further investigations are expected to identify others. However, the agreement for the precipitous deployment of Australian-led military forces into East Timor under UN auspices was largely based upon wildly fanciful estimates of more than 10,000, and up to 20,000 fatalities, whereas confirmed fatalities are in the range of 200-600. Whereas the U.S. State Department would later pass off continued rioting and killing in occupied Kosovo, despite the presence of an entire NATO army, as unfortunate, but understandable and unstoppable, due to long-standing animosities between the two sides, in East Timor, the Indonesian military was held fully responsible for the killing and rioting by East Timorese.

Second Thoughts on Integration?

The past year of UN control in East Timor has created a "dollarized" economy and a sub-culture of bars, "foreigners only" exclusive areas, fleets of UN Land Rovers, and high-priced creature comforts for the well-heeled foreign occupiers, and very little for the East Timorese, among whom unemployment has been reported as high as 80%. A generational divide is also emerging within the camp of the pro-independence victors of the August 1999 referendum, a divide between the generation of guerrilla fighters, and their children and grandchildren, who benefitted from the hard and soft infrastructural investments under Indonesian integration. The divide is best indicated by the debate over what national language to adopt, what currency to use, etc. The U.S. dollar has been adopted as the official national currency.

The language issue is more telling. Senior leaders within the pro-independence political front, the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT), including guerrilla leader Xanana Gusmao, and the UN administration in East Timor, headed by Brazilian Sergio Vieira de Mello, have chosen Portuguese as the national language. In a feature in the July 13, 2000 *New York Times*, author Rajiv Chandrasekaran interviewed senior CNRT leaders and Nino Pereira, 26, leader of

the CNRT youth wing. Senior official João Carrascalao told the author, "We have a strong and long link with Portugal. They were benevolent colonialists. It makes sense for us to speak the language."

But Pereira told the *New York Times* that East Timor should pick two languages: English, because it has become the international language of choice, and Tetun, the *lingua franca* of the Timorese. Tetun, at least, is spoken by 60% of the local population, but is incapable of expressing complex concepts. Among his generation, 90% speak "Bahasa Indonesia," but Portuguese is spoken by only 10% of the population, all among the older generation. "The old people have this nostalgia with Portugal, but they have to realize that we are moving forward. The colonial days are over," Pereira said.

Indonesia's newly appointed civilian Defense Minister, Mohammad Mahfud MD, stated publicly that after one year of UN control, "there are indications that many pro-independence supporters have changed their minds and want to be part of Indonesia." Minister Mahfud also reported that there is evidence of foreign intelligence involvement in provoking the Sept. 6 incident in West Timor, which led to the deaths of three UN aid workers: "It appears there are certain countries that keep their hands off but conduct intelligence operations to create the impression that Indonesia has failed to deal with the East Timor refugees and militia." While Western officials have ridiculed Mahfud's charges, he is not alone in the growing outcry against colonial threats from the West, and especially from the United States.

Chairman of the People's Consultative Assembly Amien Rais, who played a leading role in bringing down the Suharto regime, with considerable support from the West, has expressed outrage at the UN and U.S. dictates following the killings of the UN workers in Atambua, West Timor. "All in all," he told a seminar in Jakarta, "it was not a natural incident or coincidence. . . . It seems like we will be attacked from different sides, like Atambua, Papua (Irian Jaya), and Aceh." He slammed Defense Secretary Cohen and U.S. Ambassador to Jakarta Robert Gelbard, for claiming that the four warships and the 2,000 Marines were on a "humanitarian" mission: "I don't understand what the defenders of America in this country are saying. The presence of those Marines was threatening, and that is a military stress for us. . . . They encircled the border area with weapons and warships. I don't think that's humanitarian purposes."

The Refugees

The hue and cry about "disarming and disbanding the militia" must also be put in context. First of all, the mob that attacked the UN office in Atambua were *not* a disciplined unit of militiamen, but about 5,000 refugees, including women and children, who had gathered to mourn the death the previous day of one of their leaders, Olivio Mendosa Moruk. Moruk had been killed and physically dismembered in his home, only days after being included on the government's list

of 19 suspects to stand trial for the rampage that followed the Aug. 30, 1999 East Timor referendum. This summary execution was *expected* to provoke rage against the UN, as a symbol of the forces opposed to the pro-Indonesian sentiments of the refugees, and yet, inexplicably, several UN workers refused to vacate their offices as police requested, when the mob approached. The police managed to save seven of the ten workers when the assault began. It is also of note that the other three were not killed by military-issue weapons, but by machetes, a tool carried by nearly every peasant in every Third World rural community in the world.

There is a growing body of evidence that multiple issues are involved in the disposition of these refugees, and that body of evidence includes clear indications that senior U.S. State Department officials are fully aware of an array of problems that remain unresolved, and which are not addressed in the NGO and official diatribes demanding that the refugees be repatriated to East Timor or otherwise relocated. Included in these are the status of former civil servants who served in the Indonesian administration in pre-referendum East Timor, the status of their dependents, and the disposition of their severance pay, pensions, or re-assignment. The same issue exists for “retired” Indonesian military who served in East Timor, and their dependents, as well as displaced militia and their dependents.

Pro-Indonesian militia leader Eurico Guterres, who is also a leader of the youth movement of Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri’s PDI-P party, which holds the largest number of seats in the House of Representatives, pointed out that most of the militia’s weapons at this point are home-made guns and machetes. “Go ahead and disarm us,” he said, “but will that solve the problem? Unless all the stores are closed, don’t lay the blame on us if home-made weapons show up.” Asked if his men still had weapons, he responded: “Yes, we still have about 130,000 weapons,” referring to the 130,000 refugees still stranded in West Timor. Guterres was arrested in Jakarta on Oct. 4 in connection with the April 1999 attack on the home of a leading pro-independence proponent in East Timor.

Disbanding the militia would require the resettlement of the 130,000 refugees. Although President Abdurrahman Wahid reported upon his return from the UN’s Millennium Summit on Sept. 6-8 in New York that the United States had agreed to finance their relocation, few expect the aid to be forthcoming, with the demonization of Indonesia now dominating the U.S. Congress.

One of the most important contributions to this discussion is that of former Defense Minister Juwono Sudarsono, who has warned that the conflict will continue unless an approach of forgiveness is introduced. “I think they [the pro-independence victors in East Timor] will have to accept some degree of pardon to all these people [militia and military], otherwise, there will continue to be problems.” Several senior leaders in the region have also urged that the “demonization” of former leaders and principal actors in Indonesia’s drama must end for the country to recover, and for stability in the region.

U.S. Embarrasses Itself in Campaign vs. Sudan

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

The Millennium Summit of the United Nations General Assembly, on Sept. 6-8, was hailed as an historic event, gathering the largest number ever of heads of state and government for political deliberations. Among the noble aims laid out, to usher in the new millennium, was the project to fully democratize the United Nations itself, giving every member-nation truly equal rights in the body.

But no sooner had the special security arrangements been dismantled, than the U.S. Administration engaged in an operation which has made a mockery of the very idea of democracy, at the UN or anywhere else. Violating every norm of UN procedure, the United States, under the leadership of former Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright, and her State Department cohorts, current U.S. Ambassador to the UN Richard Holbrooke and Assistant Secretary of State Susan Rice, interfered to prevent the election of Sudan to the Security Council. To do so, they used every trick of lying, deceit, and bribery.

On Oct. 10, the tiny island nation of Mauritius was elected to the two-year rotating post, as the African candidate. Sudan lost the fight, but events will prove, that it is the United States which has suffered the greater loss: the final shreds of credibility it had in the rest of the world.

Diplomacy, Mafia-Style

The campaign to deprive Sudan of its seat on the UN Security Council was run like a mafia blackmail operation, by Albright and company. Sudan had been chosen as the candidate of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), by its 53 members, unanimously, in July 2000. Generally, it is the regional bodies which settle on a candidate. One of the many reasons why it chose Sudan, rather than Uganda (which was also named initially), or Mauritius, is that both these countries had had a seat on the Security Council more recently than Sudan, which occupied the position last in 1972. In addition to the OAU, the Arab foreign ministers all approved of Sudan.

The way the United States sabotaged Sudan’s candidacy, was to mobilize the willing stooge, Uganda, to create dissension within the ranks of the Africans. On Sept. 25, Uganda’s permanent representative to the UN sent a letter to the Chairman of the Candidatures Committee of the African Group, Roland Y. Kpotsra of Togo, totally distorting the facts relative to the choice of Sudan. The official letter of the Togo representative of Oct. 6, included two annexes, from Ambassador Amedou Kebe, the Permanent Observer of the OAU to the