

## Out of the Ashes: Destruction and Reconstruction of East Timor

### Abstract for chapter 6

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‘The CNRT campaign for independence’ is a personal account by a nationalist student leader of the struggle for independence focusing on the National Council of East Timorese Resistance’s campaign in East Timor.

The work focuses on the organisation of the CNRT campaign and its strategies: to work through the youth focusing on health and education; to spread the word to remote regions; to form the Commission for Campaign Planning and Co-ordination (CPCC); to allocate responsibilities and tasks for the campaign; to promote the cause through a door-to-door campaign, and to raise awareness of the campaign symbol through the CNRT flag and through whatever media opportunities were available.

This informal campaign structure followed the model of clandestine work that had been adhered to for more than 10 years. At great personal expense and danger, the campaigners continued to work up to and beyond the referendum.

#### *Keywords*

autonomy, CNRT, CPCC, Dili, education, health, independence, Jakarta, José Ramos Horta, Maubere, militia, OMT, RENETIL, UNAMET, Vox Populi, Xanana Gusmão

## 6

### The CNRT campaign for independence

*Fernando de Araujo*

An historical event, such as the struggle for independence and the birth of a new nation, can be told from many different perspectives. My account is just one perspective and hopefully in the future, other participants and witnesses to this event will contribute other perspectives to enrich our understanding of the history of the struggle for independence in East Timor. The writing of history is always contingent upon the position of the writer, no matter how hard some people convince us of their claim to ‘truth’ or ‘objectivity’. In this case, my position is that of a nationalist in the context of an anti-colonial struggle, who happened to be called upon to play a role not only in the campaign but in the struggle for independence. This is by no means, however, an ‘official’ account of the CNRT campaign, but rather a personal account in which I write about the important contributions of many people who may be left out, lest their enormous sacrifices and ideals be pushed aside.

#### *Two options: independence or autonomy*

After President B.J. Habibie announced the two options of ‘Independence’ and ‘Autonomy under Indonesia’, the East Timorese people who for the past 24 years had been struggling with everything they had to regain their independence, which had been taken away from them by the Indonesian military, were suddenly faced with a dilemma. This dilemma emerged because, even before the announce-

ment, the military had already intensified their recruitment of local Timorese to strengthen the ranks of the military and the militias.

Later on it would become evident that Habibie had received false reports from the military claiming that they were in complete control and that they had already done everything they could to convince the people that the best choice for the future of East Timor was the autonomy option. Based upon these military reports and driven by the practical rationalisation that Indonesia's tarnished image abroad must be repaired to expedite the flow of funds from the IMF and World Bank and to revive the Indonesian economy which was crippled by corruption and mismanagement, Habibie with great confidence announced his two options.

The Maubere people welcomed this news with optimism because it represented an acknowledgment of the justness of their long-term struggle to determine their own future. Yet, on the other hand, there was serious concern and suspicion of potential manipulation because of what we had learned from the history and experience of the people of West Papua in 1963, where it is quite clear that an international conspiracy occurred to surrender this territory to Indonesia. During that time, the Jakarta government organised a 'Referendum' appointing 1000 people to represent and vote for the entire population of West Papua. This concern, however, was put aside when the 5 May 1999 Agreement was signed in New York which stipulated that the East Timor Referendum would follow a 'one person, one vote' policy, whereby there would be no opportunity for Indonesia to manipulate the vote.

'One person, one vote' meant that Indonesia lost the opportunity to repeat its fraudulent practice in West Papua. However, the New York agreement still gave other opportunities for Jakarta to control and manipulate matters on the ground. One of the most serious flaws was the relegation of 'security issues' to the Indonesian government. The military then went on to recruit local East Timorese, increased the presence of the military in all regions of East Timor, recruited '*preman*' from Java and West Timor to terrorise, kill and torture ordinary people. Their intention was to produce a climate of fear so that people would choose autonomy as the ultimate solution to the problem of East Timor. Having put in place this climate of fear and terror, they intensified their pro-autonomy campaign, with the argumentation that the Maubere people would die of starvation if they separated from Indonesia; that rejecting autonomy would mean rejecting peace; that there was no way

the Indonesian military would ever leave East Timor; that if they rejected autonomy, everything would be annihilated and that the only thing that would be heard would be the chirping of birds: ‘choosing autonomy, blood will drip; rejecting autonomy, blood will flow’ (*‘menerima autonomi darah menetes, menolak autonomi darah mengalir’*).

Against such overwhelming political terror and intimidation, almost all sections of Timor Loro Sa’e society moved to do whatever they possibly could to disseminate information to the people and to strengthen everyone’s conviction that independence was close at hand. An initial step by the pro-independence group was to produce a critical analysis of the autonomy proposal presented at the New York meeting on 5 May. In the group’s analysis, which was published by the *Sabe Study Club* and distributed in East Timor, the weaknesses of autonomy were critically examined.

Several younger generation activists (*geração foun*)<sup>1</sup> approached Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão hoping that he would give concrete instructions on what needed to be done to prepare for the referendum. Communication occurred through letters, telephone, courier, and through *estafeta* (passing messages from hand to hand). One of the first meetings to discuss the structural division of labour and distribution of information to the East Timorese people occurred at the beginning of March 1999, when Xanana Gusmão as President of CNRT called the leaders of nationalist youth movements in Indonesia and East Timor to Salemba in Jakarta where he was under house arrest. The discussion concerned the tasks that would be assigned to the youth organisations.

### *Piãõ Avançado*

Following the pattern of mass mobilisation in the past decade where the younger generation (*juventude*) had often been at the front line in demonstrations, the youth organisations agreed to be at the forefront of the campaign for the referendum, despite the fact that there were no guarantees whatsoever of security. During this meeting with the

<sup>1</sup> *Geração foun* or younger generation refers to those who were *not* part of the 1975 leadership generation (now in their fifties and above) and who do not have the same long-standing factionalisms and party conflicts as the older generation. Among other things, intellectual formation under Indonesian colonialism and language facility are also different.

leaders of the youth political organisations, the President of CNRT emphasised that the young people must be the '*Piãõ Avançado*' ('*Piãõ*' or pawns advanced as in a chess match to shield the higher ranks). It was the younger generation, not overly confident of victory, who became the motor of this campaign. Xanana emphasised the importance of disseminating information, especially to those who lived in remote areas in the different regions – at the foot of the mountains and hill slopes – because it is they who most deserved our attention. He rearticulated once more the importance of unity among the diverse organisations.

It was also during this meeting on 4 March 1999, at Xanana's place of arrest, that he, along with the leaders of the youth organisations, began to define the shape and model of the campaign. In responding to questions and suggestions from the youth leaders, Xanana Gusmão, who was always too optimistic concerning many things, believed that it was no longer necessary for us to conduct a campaign because the pro-independence campaign had already been going on for 24 years:

If the autonomy people want to make banners saying that autonomy is the best way to go, we don't need to respond by making banners of the same size saying that independence is the better way to go. Throughout these years, the Maubere people already know their goals, the reasons for their struggle, suffering and death.

This was Xanana Gusmão's response to those who came all the way from Timor Leste and who raised questions about what kind of counter-campaign needed to be mounted against the pro-autonomy group. Throughout East Timor at this time, the autonomy group had already begun their campaign by public exhibitions of force, consolidating all their forces down to the village level and displaying banners in the streets. Stickers with the slogan – '*Hau Hili Autonomia*' ('I choose Autonomy') were posted on almost every street corner.

Listening to these descriptions, Xanana Gusmão merely said that we need not respond 'reactively' to their actions. What needed to be done by the younger generation was to behave with discipline and civility in order to help the process of 'reconciliation' which was currently in progress. 'If the autonomy group wants to distribute money to people to buy their votes, let them do it.' He was quite certain that the people were already politically aware and that they would not sell their rights. He argued that if they (the pro-autonomy group) wanted to mobilise the masses, then we should not be baited to do the same thing. What we had to do was to

work hard to create a safe environment so that UNAMET could proceed with its work smoothly. The youth must join with the masses, they must go back to their villages to work with their parents. They must make them aware of the importance of reconciliation and help them in planting their rice fields. This, according to Xanana, was what was crucially needed by the people at this time. The model of the campaign, Xanana proposed, was to be based on ‘door-to-door’ campaigning. We were to visit each house, sit with the people, and talk about our own experiences. Tell them about our experiences in 1975, about indigenous beliefs and practices, about whatever is interesting in our experience of living in Indonesia. And most importantly, we must make them aware of the virtues of accepting and forgiving each other. It was during this time that Xanana Gusmão gave instructions for students who were enrolled in universities in Java to leave their studies temporarily and to return to the countryside to help in distributing information to the people.

However, even before there were instructions from the President of CNRT, the young people studying in Indonesia had already anticipated what problems might arise and had been preparing themselves for the worst that might happen. They conducted training sessions on how to mobilise and organise the people, how to respond effectively, if for example, Indonesia suddenly withdrew its doctors from Timor Loro Sa’e, and how to fill the vacuum left by migrant teachers who would most surely leave. By this time, it had become increasingly evident that the military wanted to create an unsafe situation so that teachers and doctors would flee.

We specifically wanted to focus on the two fields of health and education because of their strong impact on the lives of the East Timorese people. We were seriously concerned about what needed to be done internally in order to prevent a crisis in obtaining medicines and health services. If the schools were to stop operating and there were no longer doctors to assist the people, then opposition to the pro-independence group could emerge, if they are unable to provide for basic needs – such as food and in helping people in the rural areas with planting and harvesting.

In April 1999, as many as 850 students at universities in Java, Bali, Lombok, Lampung and other provinces decided to leave their studies and return to East Timor to ‘distribute information to the people’ (an expression used as a substitute for ‘campaign’ to show the faithfulness of the pro-independence group in following the procedures laid down by UNAMET concerning the referendum.)

The returning students were organised by the Vice Secretary General of RENETIL, who was also the Head of IMPETTU (*Ikatan Mahasiswa dan Pelajar Timor Timur*), Engineer Mariano Sabino Lopes. Several months later, many of these students' parents expressed their anger regarding the discontinuation of their children's schooling.

The students arrived with all kinds of ideas about social programs as a way to open the path to enter villages. An effective strategy – such as going to their own villages to visit their own families – was crucial because the Indonesian military strongly suspected students arriving from outside Timor Loro Sa'e as well as those studying in the University of Timor Timur (UNTIM) and the Polytechnic in Hera. Their movements were put under surveillance and their parents were constantly interrogated about what they talked about at home. As a consequence of this hatred and suspicion of students, two students from UNTIM, who were undertaking KKN (*Kuliah Kerja Nyata*), were murdered in May 1999, in the village of Raimea, in the subdistrict of Zumale, in Kovalima.

During the mobilisation campaign, the students encountered serious difficulties in the different regions, and in many cases were unable to implement their plans because of heightened militia and military terror, including intensified interrogation at checkpoints for identity cards. This was one of the most serious obstacles we faced during the campaign. Due to these difficulties, eventually almost all important activities had to be centred in Dili. However, we continued to hope that the UN would put stronger pressure on Indonesia to abide by the New York agreement of 5 May 1999 and to fulfil its responsibility of guaranteeing safety and security for all parties, so that we would be able to continue our work without endangering our lives.

### *Presidium Juventude Lorikeu Ass'wain Timor Loro Sa'e*

It was also in April 1999, with the knowledge and approval of CNRT in Dili, that an umbrella organisation called *Presidium Juventude Lorikeu Ass'wain Timor Loro Sa'e* was formed to unify all youth movements in East Timor. This Presidium was to meet regularly during the campaign to co-ordinate and organise various tasks that needed to be done. Almost all youth organisations joined the Presidium (including Ojetil, Opjelatil, Fuan Domin, Renetil, Uniamorte, Sagrada Familia, Impettu, Fitun, União Juventude Timor Leste, and other youth pro-independence activists). The only exception were the youth groups affiliated with the PNT

party (*Partido Nacionalista de Timor*, which was founded and led by Abilio Araujo), such as, for example, RDTL (Republic of Democratic Timor Leste), a group which wants to uphold the proclamation of the Republic of Democratic Timor Leste in 28 November 1975.

The principle of the Presidium umbrella was to be non-partisan, i.e. not affiliated with any of the political parties. The Presidium would therefore put the interests of the people first before that of the divergent parties, in addition to remaining subordinate to and faithful to the CNRT leader, Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão. It was also in April 1999 that violent attacks by the military and militia were intensified: these included the murder of dozens of people in a church in Liquiça, the killing of dozens of people in the house of Manuel Carrascalão, the murder of one of the leaders of CNRT in Dili and attacks in other places, such as Atsabe, Maubara, Zumalae. As a consequence, many people fled their villages to become refugees in Dili and many of the leaders of CNRT also fled, to the extent that only David Ximenes and Leandro Isaac remained in Dili. Leandro Isaac had to seek refuge in the Police office (*Polres*) in Dili while David Ximenes moved from house to house for safety. David Ximenes' political activities could only be conducted at night because it was only when it was dark that he was able to meet with activists and journalists to co-ordinate CNRT activities. His house was burnt down along with the only motorcycle he owned for transport.

From the middle of April to the middle of June, the official activities of CNRT in Timor Loro Sa'e came to a halt. People were confused; some were frustrated and raised questions about where the leadership of CNRT was. It was the youth movement which continued to be organised, trying very hard keep up spirits and to give information to the people. Falintil also worked very hard to organise the people, but faced the same difficulties with the military and militias, especially in the western regions of Suai, Maliana and Oecussi.

### *Matebian Lian*

Due to the impossibility of conducting their tasks in the villages, many students converged in Dili. There they were able to publish three different bulletins – *Unidade*, *Liberta* and *Loriku Lian*. These bulletins could not be printed because no printing presses in Dili were brave enough to publish them. Their publication was carried out through photocopying. In addition to printed publications they also broadcast a radio program, which was given the name *Matebian Lian*. *Matebian* means 'spirit' and *lian*

means 'voice'. This name was chosen because this particular radio broadcast had no central station but moved from place to place in order to avoid detection by the military. The people could listen to and follow *Matebian Lian* but they did not know from where the voice originated. Because they could only hear it but did not know the exact position of the news emanating from the radio broadcast, it was given this name of *Matebian Lian* ("Spirit Voice"). The news published in the various bulletins and in *Matebian Lian* included updates on the process of 'reconciliation', the announcements made by UNAMET on referendum procedures, and commands given by Xanana Gusmão and the CNRT leadership. Even though he was still under house arrest in Jakarta, Xanana Gusmão tried hard to give direction to the news that was broadcast and published with the goal of facilitating the process of reconciliation which was being initiated by the two bishops (Bacilio Nascimento of Baucau and Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo of Dili).

In June 1999, Francisco Lopes da Cruz issued a strong threat against the circulation of these bulletins with the accusation that they are insulting the pro-autonomy group and asked the security apparatus to prevent their publication and circulation. A few days' later, there was an order from the military commander (Danrem) in Dili to search for and stop the broadcasts of Radio Matebian Lian, charging that this radio broadcast was instigating anti-autonomy feelings among the people. This order was delivered in a ruthless fashion threatening that the radio program had to be eliminated and its producers brought before him within 24 hours.

The radio continued to broadcast successfully in different regions, including Aileu, Ermera, Maliana, Los Palos, Baucau and Viqueque. After one or two nights in one place, they moved from place to place, sometimes crossing mountains and walking on foot from one subdistrict to another to avoid detection.

### *Comissão de Planeamento e Coordenação da Campanha (CPCC)*

On 27 June 1999, Dare II was held at the Sheraton Hotel in Jakarta, a 'reconciliation' meeting organised by the two bishops, which included leaders from both sides – pro-independence and pro-autonomy. Several CNRT leaders, some of whom had not been allowed to set foot in Indonesia for 24 years were allowed to attend this reconciliation meeting. Those attending included José Ramos Horta, Mari Alkatiri, João Carrascalão, Roque Rodrigues and many others.

After the Dare II meeting in Jakarta concluded, all of the participants gathered at Xanana's place in Salemba, for the CNRT to discuss officially everything that pertained to the upcoming campaign. On 2 July, during a national meeting of the CNRT, the decision was made to form the CPCC (*Comissão de Planeamento e Coordenação da Campanha*) as the official body responsible for the campaign for independence. CPCC formulated programs and co-ordinated all of the elements involved in the struggle, including how to work with UNAMET's electoral section, and producing all materials needed for the campaign. CPCC was responsible to Xanana Gusmão as President of CNRT. On the ground, it was the *Frente Política Interna* (FPI) in Timor Loro Sa'e who exercised executive duties in implementing programs planned by the CPCC. There were nine departments or sections in the CPCC. After the formation of these sections, Xanana announced the names of those who would be responsible for each section:

- |   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| 1. Social Communications                      | Fernando de Araujo |
| 2. Logistics (Consumption and Transportation) | João Alves         |
| 3. Inter-Regional Relations                   | Lucas da Costa     |
| 4. Political Mobilisation                     | Mariano Sabino     |
| 5. Juridical/Legal Issues                     | Olandina Caeiro    |
| 6. Education and Monitoring                   | Armando Maia       |
| 7. Training of Cadres for the Campaign        | José Reis          |
| 8. Information                                | Agio Pereira       |
| 9. Finance                                    | Maria Paixão       |

Mar Kairos was appointed as overall co-ordinator for CPCC. On the ground, however, the section on juridical issues was eliminated because of several technical problems: among them, the difficulties of investigating violations that were occurring, problems of co-operation from the part of the Indonesian military, and the fact that there was no juridical section within UNAMET itself.

At the time when the CNRT had just formed CPCC, the pro-autonomy group was already well on its way in campaigning all over East Timor. Francisco Lopes went on a tour of the regions, arranging public meetings with the masses and utilising all of the state apparatus he could possibly call upon: from village heads to the governor, from the soldiers appointed to control village heads (Babinsa) to the military commander (Danrem) – all were mobilised to convince the East Timorese people to continue to uphold the red and white Indonesian flag in East Timor.

On 9 July 1999, the CPCC's first meeting in Dili was held to allocate tasks. We began an inventory of all facilities that existed and which we could use for the campaign. The possibilities of using the printing presses, radio stations, television stations or even walkie-talkies (for which it was claimed, we needed a letter of permission (*surat izin*)) were almost nil because the pro-autonomy group had already pressured those who headed these facilities not to give the pro-independence group the chance to use them.

### *The CNRT flag*

Because of the problem of lack of access to communication facilities, during the meeting of 9 July, we decided to conduct the campaign door-to-door and to begin immediately to make people aware of the CNRT flag and the symbols that would be used by both sides. At this time, these symbols were still quite ambiguous because there had not yet been conclusive discussions from the two sides along with UNAMET regarding preferred symbols. However, those of us at the CPCC were quite bold in taking the initiative to go ahead and print thousands of copies of the CNRT flag because during the meetings in Jakarta, the CNRT leadership had already agreed upon the colours and symbolism of the flag, raised on top of a map of East Timor, as the symbol for pro-independence. We calculated that even if the pro-autonomy group were to also use the map of East Timor for their symbol (which they did), they would not be able to claim or appropriate the CNRT flag, unless there was dissension and confusion within the pro-independence group itself about changing the flag.

We saw the issue of the flag as quite crucial when we reflected on the fact that a majority of East Timorese villagers were illiterate, and would probably be attracted by symbols rather than by written materials. Also, the CNRT flag was a new creation and most people didn't even know what it looked like. They were more familiar with the Fretilin and Falintil flags. In the process, people in the pro-independence group became actively involved in looking for the CNRT flag – searching in the web site to copy it. There were those who drew and coloured it by hand, others photocopied it even though it came out as black and white and lost the symbolism of the colours blue, black, white and green.

Within three days, the CNRT flag had been distributed throughout the city of Dili and the door-to-door campaign had begun. The

young people involved in the *Presidium Juventude Loriku Ass'nain* began visiting house-to-house to make people aware of the CNRT flag and the pro-independence symbols, and to explain the procedures for registering and voting in the referendum. There were so many people involved in this: non-students, women teachers, ordinary people came to the office of RENETIL asking for banners, flyers and stickers so that they could help distribute them from house-to-house, despite the fact that they were regularly confronted by militia and the military who tried to ensure that they would not be able to distribute this information. In spite of the overwhelming political odds against us, this campaign was successfully realised in the eastern region of East Timor, although the western region was difficult because militia and military activity there was quite intensive.

This informal campaign was carried out following the model of well-disciplined clandestine work, which we had adhered to for more than 10 years. Xanana continually reminded us not to aggravate tensions by demonstrating in the streets or organising mass rallies for this could be used by the pro-autonomy group and the military to provoke clashes which may result in more deaths. He also advised us not to pre-empt the referendum schedule set up by UNAMET.

At the formal level, CPCC leaders attended meetings with UNAMET, in particular the Electoral Affairs Section to discuss the timetable for the campaign, its format, the facilities that would be used, the themes that could be touched upon without violating the rights of the other group, and so on. No word was more misapplied and corrupted than the word 'neutral'. The major NGOs (including Yayasan Hak, FOKUPERS, CARE, Caritas, TimorAid) were supposedly 'neutral'; UNAMET was 'neutral'; all international observers' groups accredited by the UN had to be 'neutral'; the church was 'neutral'. This 'neutral' stance prevented them from openly and publicly supporting the pro-independence campaign, even though individual members of these groups were sympathetic to and actively involved in the struggle for independence.

The politics of reconciliation at the elite level continued to progress even though every day there were reports of violence by the military and militias – shootings, attacks, more refugees displaced from their homes. Several times, our office (the RENETIL office had become the meeting place for the CPCC and contained important computer and other facilities) had to be closed due to threats of an attack by the

militias. My family and I were threatened with death, and so was almost everyone we knew who was outspokenly pro-independence. We filed an official report of these threats with UNAMET's Political Affairs Section and with the Dili Police. Everyone involved in the radio, television and newspaper projects had to work in their own homes and come back the following day to discuss their completed work.

In organising this campaign, CNRT received contributions (financial and otherwise) from several solidarity groups. However, the violence that erupted afterwards did not enable the CPCC committee to hold a concluding meeting to find out which groups and people had helped us – only Xanana and Mar Kairos know who the donors were. Each committee was requested to file a report regarding finances and activities; however, by the time I submitted my report to Mar Kairos, the situation had already become so dangerous that everyone was forced to go into hiding.

### *Organização da Mulheres Timorenses (OMT)*

Aside from the students, the other sector of society that was extremely active was the organisation of women's groups. When I think back to the months of June, July, August and September, when the 'campaign' was at its height, it was mostly women who were the most visible and active members of the campaign. And yet in terms of representation in the media they were virtually invisible. There were several women who formed the main 'nerve centres' of political work in East Timor, and who could have literally brought political life to an abrupt halt if they had withdrawn their logistical support and intellectual resources. These women include members of the Organisation of Timorese Women: (OMT: *Organização da Mulheres Timorenses*), GERTAK, FOKUPERS, and individuals such as Lucia Lobato, Maria Paixão, Felicidade Gutteres, Odette Gutteres, Armandina Gusmão, Olandina Caero, Pascoela Barreto, Sister Lourdes (in Dare), Sister Esmeralda (who took leadership of the 1500 or more refugees in the UNAMET compound), Sister Marlene Bautista (a Filipina nun who has worked in East Timor for 10 years). As some observers have noted, women's movements can on their own present a formidable opposition group to any regime that is potentially patriarchal, misogynist and totalitarian.

But perhaps the women who sacrificed the most were the women

who suddenly received news one day that their son had died, either drowned, killed by the military, or had disappeared. And the women who waited. The struggle for independence forcibly separated families – sons from their mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters, wives from their husbands and children, lovers from those who might have been their future spouses.

### *Vox Populi*

The Section on Social Communications (CPCC) was successful in publishing a newspaper called *Vox Populi* every two days, after intensive interpersonal lobbying of the only private printing press in Dili which published *Suara Timor Timur* (STT). This was the only daily newspaper circulating in Dili at that time and was owned by the Secretary-General of the pro-autonomy group BRTT (*Barisan Rakyat Timor Timur*) under the leadership of Francisco Lopes da Cruz. Eventually they agreed to print our newspaper because of pressure on the managers of the press from almost all of the journalists and workers (with the courageous lobbying of Hugo Adevito da Costa) within *Suara Timor Timur*.

It was also because of good personal relations with the director of the government-owned Radio Republic Indonesia in Dili that the CPCC was allowed to use radio facilities free of charge to broadcast the pro-independence campaign. This was also true for TVRI where we aired our campaign at least three times. Our radio broadcasters, who were living in Dili at the outbreak of the violence, became prime targets for the militia. These included the highly talented artist and performer Anito Matos as well as Armandina Gusmão and Carmelita Monis. It was extremely difficult for all of us to co-ordinate the taping of the radio programs because of the security problems. It was dangerous for us to still be out collecting news, taping, writing and editing late at night, when the streets were supposed to be empty by 7.00 pm. There were numerous people (not all of whose individual names can be mentioned here), who worked very hard on these projects. They included Virgílio da Silva Gutteres, Maria (Eté) Gracieté, Micha Barreto Soares, Metodio Moniz, Vicente da Costa Pinto, Rigoberto Monteiro, Eusebio Gutteres, Siak or Zeca, Ato', Kim Pai, Juliao M., José Neves, Antonio Conceição, Nuno Rodrigues, Anito Matos, Vitorino Cardoso Santos, Armindo Maia, Jacqueline (Joy) Siapno, Agio Pereira, Ceu Brites, Ines Almeida, Nino Pereira, and Armandina Gusmão.

The other media facilities used by CPCC included *Radio Timor Kmanek*, a well-funded establishment owned by the Catholic church. We signed a contract for 12 days, following the official program schedule laid out by UNAMET. However, we were only able to broadcast until 26 August because by that time, security in Dili already seemed out of control. This was also true for *Vox Populi* and the distribution of pamphlets and other brochures. Many of these documents were left scattered in the office which all of us had to abandon in a hurry. The news which we printed and broadcast was edited by a rigorous editorial team in CPCC to avoid language that might provoke the pro-autonomy group. In retrospect, I am amazed at how we in the pro-independence group tried with great discipline and good faith to follow the UNAMET rules and to help the process of reconciliation, even though there was nothing in the pro-autonomy group that indicated that they were abiding by any rules.

The most problematic were the hundreds of thousands of coloured brochures and flyers which had to be printed in Jakarta and Surabaya because there were no presses in Dili that printed with colour. To prepare and translate them (into Portuguese, Indonesian, English and Tetun) and get them back, we needed at least a week, but there were serious delays because of technical problems. We were constantly worried that there would be sabotage on the part of the military. Ironically, the person in charge of the logistics of all this was an East Timorese (José B.C. Das Neves or Pak Beni) who had an important position in the Indonesian bureaucracy, but who, in private, was quite earnest in supporting our campaign, and using the facilities of his office for our benefit. The CNRT flag had to be produced in Australia and underwent a long journey before arriving in Dili.

After the boxes of materials were unloaded from the ship and planes, the next problem we faced was how to distribute them effectively so that they reached even the most distant regions. At one unloading at the port of Dili, the materials went missing, and we were afraid that they had been detected and confiscated by the military. Several times our volunteer couriers carrying these materials were blocked at checkpoints and arrested and the materials confiscated and destroyed. This happened in Liquiça, Hera and Aileu. We reported these violations to UNAMET staff, but again there was no concrete action against the military and militia members who carried this out. This was one of the most serious flaws with the 5 May Agreement that it did not set out punitive measures against those who violated

rules of the agreement and that it gave the responsibility of 'security' to the same apparatus responsible for the brutal acts of violence in East Timor. The official campaign period originally scheduled by UNAMET to run from 14-28 August had to end three days beforehand because of the violence that ensued.

Because of the extreme difficulties faced by all elements of the struggle, the distribution of information only reached up to the regency and sub-district levels. We faced serious obstacles in the villages because the military and militias were intent on isolating village people from the latest information and developments emanating from Dili. This isolation was conducted systematically because the military believed that if they were successful in isolating the villages from information, then at least 60 per cent of the vote would be for pro-autonomy. This tactic gave Foreign Minister Ali Alatas the confidence to announce: 'Now Ramos Horta shall be proven wrong that 99 per cent of East Timorese will choose independence.'

### *The last days of August*

In the last days of August, before the referendum of 30 August, the primary focus of the CPCC was to try our best to ensure that everyone who had registered safely could vote on that day. Even though militia and military violence was on the rise, this was the one and only chance for our people to articulate their political aspirations.

During this time Xanana gave instructions to everyone involved in the struggle on the ground to 'control the masses' and not to be provoked by the military and militia because if this were to happen, more people would be killed. In Jakarta, he continued to establish contacts with the leaders of the pro-autonomy group to negotiate and ensure that there would be no more bloodshed. There were several false promises from Francisco Lopes and Eurico Guterres that they would give instructions to their various subordinates not to act brutally towards the civilian population. Eurico and Francisco Lopes publicly announced that they themselves would respect the results if the majority of East Timorese chose independence. However, it has now become very clear that while making these duplicitous statements, they were systematically preparing for a scorched earth policy, had already begun accusing UNAMET of not being 'neutral', and were laying out their violent plans not to accept the results of the referendum if it favoured independence.

The pro-independence group strictly abided by Xanana's instructions not to organise public mass rallies. However, because of extraordinary enthusiasm from the people to come out into the streets, the CPCC decided to hold one public campaign rally on 25 August. On that day, the entire city of Dili was a sea of humanity. The roads were filled with people – even toddlers from two to five years old, full of spirit and excitement singing and chanting – *Mate Ka Moris, Ukun Rasik An* – ('Life or Death, Independence') – *Mate Ka Moris, Duni Bapak Sai* – ('Life or Death, Expel the Military'). Grandmothers and elderly people stood by the side of the roads, dancing and instructing everyone to punch a hole in the CNRT flag on top of the East Timor map, which symbolised freedom. It was an extraordinary experience. There was a young boy wearing a funny mask with black glasses and a big nose, a young man who painted his face red with different colours, an estimated 1000 cars and buses packed with human beings, and thousands of people in the streets chanting the convoy along.

On that day there were no provocations toward the military or militia. Sadly a bus carrying dozens of pro-independence supporters overturned and killed two people, and rumours spread that the driver was a pro-autonomy supporter who had intentionally overturned the bus. In spite of this, the rest of the day went quite peacefully until around 4.00 pm when the campaign concluded in front of the CNRT office in *Jalan Lecidere* near the sea.

On 26 August, it was the turn of the pro-autonomy group to conduct its campaign. The pro-autonomy convoy began by insulting people in the streets and throwing stones at houses and people. In Desa Kuluhun, some inhabitants responded to these insults by throwing stones back. What happened next became much more serious than throwing stones and insulting each other. The mobile police (*Brimob*) indiscriminately opened fire with automatic rifles on civilians in the street, killing three people, one of whom was a student member of RENETIL who had been studying in Malang, named Bedinho Gutierrez. He was also one of the journalists for *Vox Populi*. Some international and Indonesian journalists who witnessed the event were beaten and intimidated by the police. The corpses could not be buried as they properly should have been. Only the women and children could take the corpses; the men couldn't do so because the military and militia were already swarming at the scene of the crime to prevent people from expressing public grief.

From 26 August onwards, all campaign activities of the pro-independence group came to a stop because it became impossible to carry out our tasks. That night, the CNRT office was attacked; the contents of the office including computers, walkie-talkies, radios and chairs were looted and then the building was burned. The RENETIL office was attacked and the windows smashed, forcing the students to flee in different directions. The same acts of looting and arson were done on other buildings occupied by organisations working for the pro-independence campaign. The following morning, Dili seemed like a dead city; everyone stayed in their houses with nothing to do but wait for 30 August, referendum day.

On that historic day of 30 August, most people came out to cast their vote, but returned soon afterwards to their homes; and, by nightfall the situation was quite tense. There was no shooting on 30 August, voting day. It began the following day. The following day, shooting began everywhere and so did the burning and the fires. It became impossible to meet with other people because it was too dangerous to walk in the streets. Everyone stayed in their houses waiting for the results of the referendum to be announced.

Initially the results were supposed to be announced one week after the vote. However, due to security considerations of possible military tampering with the boxes (at one point UNAMET staff were held hostage), counting began on 1 September. The CPCC members, including myself, were asked to become witnesses to ensure fair counting. Counting went on for three days. However, on 1 September, people were already leaving their houses to seek refuge elsewhere. Several of them went to Dare. Others went to the churches and to Bishop Belo's residence which, they thought, would be safe, but where later on, the military and militias attacked and massacred more than 30 people. Olandina Caeiro had called us that morning inviting us to join them at Bishop Belo's house saying 'We're having a little independence celebration; why not join; everyone is here. If we're going to die, we might as well all be together.' News spread that the military and militias would be conducting house-to-house searches to execute pro-independence leaders. We would leave later, on 5 September, to join 50 000 refugees who had fled to the mountains.

We won, but we were the ones who had to become refugees in the forests and mountains from where we could watch as our houses were looted and burned. Everything the people owned was looted –

cars, motorcycles, appliances, clothes, wedding photographs – and loaded onto military trucks heading toward the western border, to Atambua and then to Kupang. From above in the mountains, we could watch Dili being burnt to the ground, with the smoke thickening as each day passed. Infants cried because there was no milk and they were hungry, their bodies itched from dirt and poor sanitary conditions. Because we had cast our vote on 30 August, life in Timor Loro Sa'e was no longer the same. Grandmothers and grandfathers had to climb tortuous steep mountains, supporting themselves with canes, because they had no other choice if they wanted to continue living, after the military and militias attacked.

### *Independence day*

On 4 September, Saturday, the result of the referendum was announced, and momentarily people were able to celebrate with immense joy, crying and hugging each other. Immediately afterwards they silently grieved for the many heroes and heroines who lost their lives in the struggle to achieve independence. I can only hope that in our efforts to build this new nation, we do not betray them.

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