



Christian Anti-Communism Crusade

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February 1, 1976

THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

Dear Friends,

I spent Christmas with my wife Lillian in Australia and my return to the U.S. was delayed somewhat because Dr. John Whitehall and our son David were engaged in a valiant but unsuccessful attempt to deliver food and medical aid to suffering refugees in East Timor.

I reported previously the manner in which John Whitehall reached East Timor, the former Portuguese colony, during the civil war between the forces led by the Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of East Timor (FRETILIN) and the Democratic Union of Timor (UDT). The Timorese Army equipped with NATO weapons, had joined the forces of FRETILIN and assured their victory. When John arrived in Dili, the administrative capital, the civil war was still raging and he found 60 untreated war casualties in agony and filth. He saved many lives by surgery and the use of drugs such as Penicillin and developed a deep affection for the Timorese people most of whom resembled children in their attitudes and emotions. A clinic to give continuing medical service, both preventive and curative was established.

John established a personal relationship with several of the Fretilin leaders. Fretilin is usually presented as a Communist organization by the press, but he is convinced that this is an oversimplification verging on a misrepresentation. It is true that many, if not most, of the external associates of Fretilin were and are communists and that a few communists were active within Fretilin itself. However, most of the leaders of Fretilin were simple untutored nationalists and there was a good chance of removing the communists from power and influence within the movement.



The Timorese love their children



John Whitehall at work in the clinic in Dili

Indonesia decided to invade East Timor, and the Australian Government evacuated those operating the clinic in mid-December. The invading forces captured Dili and major population centers with relative ease, but the forces of Fretilin retreated to the mountains and continued the resistance. Indonesia has euphemistically classified its action as sending volunteers to assist indigenous Timorese forces and claims it has no authority over the Provisional Government that has been established in Dili. The United Nations, the Portuguese Government and multitudinous communist and left-wing organizations in Australia have condemned the Indonesian action. Representatives of Fretilin have visited Communist China, Communist Vietnam and other communist countries and have received assurances of support. It is now almost certain that Fretilin will fall under complete communist domination if it is able to organize a continuing guerrilla war against the invading forces, and the communist countries supply weapons and leaders.

The Military Situation

It has been exceedingly difficult to secure accurate information about the military situation in East Timor. The sole sources of information have been official reports from the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, and reports from the clandestine Fretilin radio. It is not surprising that these have been contradictory. Indonesia claims that their forces have been welcomed by the overwhelming majority of the Timorese while the Fretilin radio claims that the Indonesians have established garrisons in the cities and that these are immobilized by the surrounding Timorese people. It claims that 10,000 Indonesians have been killed.

The Refugees

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the invasion, it is certain that the Timorese people are suffering. Many of them have assuredly fled from the fighting. Dili is situated on the north coast of the island and the natural escape route is south. John is convinced that a concentration of refugees, possibly as many as 100,000, is in the southern region where there is a small town, Same, served by a primitive port on the south coast, Botano. The plight of these refugees must be deplorable due to shortage of food and the complete absence of medical services. It was decided to make an attempt to reach them to supply food and medicine.

The Journey

A small team was assembled which consisted of John; an additional surgeon, Bruce Piper; our son David, who was to serve as radio operator; and a general administrator, Bill Bancroft.

This team set forth from Darwin, Australia's northern port, at 9:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 20, in a barge of the type used to land troops in the Second World War, which was hired from Express Barge Services of Darwin at the cost of \$1000 per day. The 400-mile journey was expected to take two days. The team was accompanied by three newsmen and the barge carried 8 tons of rice and half a ton of medical supplies. The arrangement was that the barge would transport them to the limit of the territorial waters whereupon a smaller boat would be launched to take the team and supplies to the beach. The launching and loading of the smaller boat would be hazardous as the barge lacked facilities for launching the boat. Many trips would be needed to transport the supplies to shore. If they successfully reached the shore, the situation they would face was unknown.

They set forth at night as they did not wish their departure to be prevented. Once they were under way, it was desirable that their purpose and destination should be known as they did not wish any

Indonesian warship that might intercept them to suspect that they were engaged in transporting military supplies and to react accordingly. Shortly after their departure, the following cable was sent to various officials:

"A team to give medical aid and food to East Timor has left Darwin in the barge 'Alanna Fay' and expects to reach Botano about mid-day Thursday, January 22. It consists of two doctors, a radio operator and administrator and is accompanied by three newsmen. It is organized by the Australian Society for the Inter-country Aid -- Timor (A.S.I.A.T.) which has previously provided medical service in East Timor. This service is humanitarian and the motivation is religious. It hopes to provide help for all. A.S.I.A.T. is not involved in the political problems of East Timor." (Dr. John Whitehall)

This cable was addressed to:

Dr. Malik, Foreign Affairs Minister, Jakarta, Republic of Indonesia
 Mr. Peacock, Foreign Affairs Minister, Canberra, Australia
 The Secretary General United Nations, New York, N.Y., U.S.A.
 Ramos Horta, Representative Fretilin, United Nations, N.Y., U.S.A.
 J. Carascalao, Representative U.D.T., United Nations, N.Y., U.S.A.
 East Timor Provisional Government, c/o Dr. Malik, Foreign Affairs Minister, Jakarta, Indonesia

As soon as the barge reached the open sea, it was confronted by heavy seas and was constantly battered by 16-foot waves. After 4 hours of this buffeting, a fuel line supplying one of the engines broke and it was compelled to return to port for repairs. Back in Darwin harbor, they found themselves located between two frigates of the Australian Navy while customs officials carried out an inspection. One of the inspectors was heard to remark, "I'm scared on this barge even when it is tied up in port."

The Australian Government Reacts

High officials of the Australian Government went into conference to decide whether the team should be permitted to depart. It was finally decided that the venture was too risky and must be stopped. The following report from the Sydney Morning Herald describes the situation:

Timor aid team stopped

IT'S TOO RISKY, SAYS PEACOCK

By our Diplomatic Reporter

CANBERRA, Thursday.—The Federal Government has refused to sanction a voluntary Australian medical team sailing to Portuguese East Timor.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Peacock, said today the venture was too risky.

Although the team had said it would absolve the Government of all responsibility, Mr Peacock said it was not possible for the Government to shelve that responsibility.

He said the Government's refusal was based on the risks that would be faced by Australians if they went into the Timor war zone.

The team was assem-

bled by the Australian Society of Inter-Country Aid.

In a carefully worded statement, Mr Peacock made clear that he was concerned that Australia's policy of non-intervention in East Timor was being ignored by the warring factions.

He referred to the deaths of five Australian television journalists in East Timor in October last year, and the dis-

appearance of another journalist, Mr Roger East, last month.

This had shown there were no well-defined military lines, and non-combatants could find themselves in considerable danger.

The team of volunteers had applied for a clearance to go to East Timor from the Customs and Immigration Department.

The application was lodged yesterday after

Timor Aid Team Stopped (Cont'd.)

the team, led by Dr John Whitehall, had left Darwin without permission aboard the 100-tonne barge Alaana Fay on Tuesday night.

The vessel returned yesterday morning reportedly because of engine trouble.

Mr Peacock said today the Government's attitude to humanitarian aid

for Timor was clear.

"The Government is anxious that all forms of relief should be resumed.

"It has made numerous representations to this effect to the Indonesian Government — most recently during my meeting with Indonesian leaders in Jakarta earlier this week.

"The Indonesian Government has undertaken to speak again to the authorities in East Timor about the matter."

Mr Peacock said the Australian Government was still hopeful that Red Cross operations would soon be allowed to resume.

When relief operations

were restored, the Government was ready to give "very positive consideration" to requests for help in transporting medical and food supplies to East Timor.

Family Attitudes

The attitude of the families of the members of the team to this expedition can be imagined. We were immensely proud of the motives and courage of our children but deeply concerned about the dangers of the expedition. We prayed fervently. We were particularly concerned about John's wife, Elsie, who is the mother of four small children and expects a fifth in early March. Elsie confronted the reporters, who interviewed her, with apparent serenity and answered questions with clarity and precision. Lillian is convinced that the engine failure that caused the barge to return, was an answer to prayer.

The anticommunist cause demands more than reading books, writing articles and making speeches. At times it demands courageous action in the face of great odds. The communists have frequently demonstrated great courage in the pursuit of their objectives. It is good to know there are those who will voluntarily face danger and place their lives on the line in the service of humanity and the cause of freedom.

We are now considering what, if anything, we can do in Angola.

Most of us are not called upon to risk our lives—at least not yet. We are called upon to donate some of our worldly goods in this tremendous battle. I confidently ask you to make your sacrifice by sending a substantial gift.

With Christian love,

Fred Schwarz

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