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BRITISH EMBASSY,
DJAKARTA.

1. Enter please
2. G. R. D. P. (P. S. J. Cab. Office) ^{done} 29/7
~~Call of Jack D. J.~~
3. Mr Jones ^{sent} ^{29/7} ^{22/7}

14 July 1975

P J E Male Esq CMC MC
FCO

RECEIVED IN
REGISTRY No. 14
23 JUL 1975
FAJ 1/1

M. G. L. Smith for view as appropriate
Would you please thank Mr. ...
I shall like to see again of 18/8
Pm 18/7

Dear Peter,

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As indicated in my telegram No. 215 of 12 July, I sent my Head of Chancery, Gordon Duggan since he is accredited to Portuguese Timor as British Consul, to visit the territory from 2-9 July. I enclose a copy of his report.

2. Duggan's visit appears to have been welcomed by the Governor and his Portuguese Army staff; and they evidently did their best to be helpful to him, allowing him to do what he wanted. Indeed they made it clear that they had decided that it was in their interests to have the situation in the territory widely known and understood, particularly since Portuguese Timor might become an international diplomatic issue.

3. Duggan's view of the prospects (paragraphs 45-51 of his report) make gloomy reading. The Portuguese, whatever their present sense of mission have left themselves too much to do in too short a time. The territory has been too backward for too long to be able quickly to develop any genuine democracy and its diverse ethnic groups with their inexperienced politicians and political parties provide fertile soil for passionate rivalries and disruptive tensions; moreover the privileged ranks of the Timorese soldiery anxious to retain their status and higher living standards lurk in the wings as the obvious successors to the Portuguese Administration. The chances of unrest and of a military coup thus might be rated high.

4. The Indonesian media have, with official backing, already played up incidents in the territory and they exaggerated/clash between party supporters on 28 June (Paragraph 17 of the report) which was falsely reported by the Indonesian News Agency, Antara, to have cost six lives. If the Indonesians want to find excuse to intervene they should have little difficulty. For the moment, however, I am prepared to believe the Indonesians' public statements that they hope the territory's future will be settled by peaceful means.

5. Nevertheless we must face the fact that trouble is almost certainly on the horizon: the Indonesians want ultimately to

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see Portuguese Timor an integrated part of Indonesia; yet within the territory the signals at the moment are clearly set towards independence. At most Indonesians have about three years until October 1978 to persuade the people to opt for integration. At worst they will be faced by a coup d'état of local military leaders committed to local independence under their rule. Even under the best conditions the Indonesians will have no easy task to persuade the population to cast their future in with them: there is a large backlog of suspicion and ignorance to surmount; and the key figure on the spot, the Indonesian Consul in Dili, seems to be playing his hand badly.

6. Paragraph 2 of the record of Major Vitor Alves' discussion with the Minister of State on 4 July (enclosed with Jones' letter to Duggan of the same date) indicated that in Lisbon the Portuguese Government saw no future in an independent Timor, and the Administration in Dili evidently realise that unless there is some miracle in the oil field, Timor can never be economically viable. Both are committed to honour the wishes of the people but neither could probably do anything effective against a local military coup. Nor does a deal between Jakarta and Lisbon seem likely in the cards.

7. One conclusion does seem to stand out from Gordon's report; the people of Portuguese Timor are in no condition to exercise the right of self-determination; their politicians are likely to continue their squabbling and dissension and, in the absence of a strong lead from Lisbon or a military coup, political confusion will grow worse and the territory's soil become even more fertile for trouble-making. Duggan saw no evidence that either the Russians or the Red Chinese were yet stirring the pot; but any increase in Soviet influence in Lisbon might increase the chances that the former will seek to exploit the situation, and we shall keep as close an eye out as possible for signs that they are doing so. Even without Soviet or Chinese intervention the territory seems likely to become steadily more of a problem child, and the arguments in favour of its integration into Indonesia are all the stronger. Though it still remains in our interest to steer clear of becoming involved in its future, developments in Lisbon since the preparation of the enclosure to Palmer's letter of March 4 seem now to argue in favour of greater sympathy towards Indonesia should the Indonesia Government feel forced to take strong action by the deteriorating situation in Portuguese Timor. Certainly as seen from here it is in Britain's interest that Indonesia should absorb the territory as soon and as unobtrusively as possible; and that if it comes to the crunch and there is a row in the United Nations we should keep our heads down and avoid siding against the Indonesian Government.

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8. I am copying this letter and enclosure to Lisbon, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Canberra, Bangkok, Manila and UKMIS New York. Copies are also going to the Ministry of Defence (Defence Intelligence 2).

Yours etc,

J A Ford

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