

A REMARKABLE ACCOUNT

Bonded through Tragedy, United in Hope is a remarkable account of East Timor's struggles for self-determination through the eyes of a Melbourne Catholic bishop, Hilton Deakin. He found himself closely involved with key actors, including Bishop Belo and Xanana Gusmao, the independence leader and politician who served as the first president (2002–2007) and fourth prime minister (2007–15) of East Timor.

Learning as an anthropologist from his friendships with Aboriginal people, Deakin responded strongly in 1991 to the call to leadership and solidarity from East Timorese living in Melbourne. In 1992 he was appointed an auxiliary bishop in Melbourne, which gave him entrée to the inner circles of Church and civil networks in Australia and East Timor.

The Catholic Church played a critical role among the East Timorese, who became overwhelmingly Catholic by this time. They found in the Church a vehicle of cohesion and identity as East Timorese, as well as a source of moral, social and political support.

This book is the first detailed account of the interaction of the Vatican, the Indonesian government, the Indonesian Catholic Church, the Australian government, Australians and others dedicated to justice and human rights, and the Australian Catholic Church. Deakin was closely involved with many of these developments.

In his later role as head of Caritas Australia, Deakin also reflects the hope and anguish in wider international justice movements, including in Rwanda. Deakin was well known in Melbourne and a regular speaker in public events, at marches for human rights and peace, as well as in support of refugees, asylum seekers and Indigenous issues.

The authors of this memoir, Professor Therese D'Orsa and Dr Jim D'Orsa, distilled many interviews with Hilton Deakin and scoured his extensive documentation to produce an insightful account of his life story. They have also preserved Deakin's voice throughout, making the account eminently readable and personal.

In the view of Xanana Gusmao, "Bishop Hilton gave us a voice in Australia, at a time when our struggle was largely forgotten or ignored, and around the world in various forums within the Catholic Church and the wider community."

'Bonded through Tragedy...,' "tells an important part of our history – the history of the church in our struggle. But it also tells the story of an incredible man, a man whose life embodies the best of Catholicism; an intelligent spirituality, a commitment to social justice and a genuine love of people."

Hilton Deakin's story has been largely unknown, but deserves to be celebrated as a remarkable contribution by an intrepid Melbourne priest and a Church leader who played a critical role in one of the most fraught crises in Australia's recent history.

Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv.

Bishop of Parramatta

BONDED THROUGH TRAGEDY UNITED IN HOPE

The Catholic Church and East Timor's Struggle for Independence
A Memoir

Hilton Deakin
with Jim and Therese D'Orsa

CONTENTS

<i>Glossary</i>	ix
<i>Foreword</i>	xii
<i>Introduction</i>	1
1 Our Stories Determine Who We are	6
2 Meeting the Timorese for the First Time	15

PART ONE THREE STORIES

1 Hilton's Story

3 A Boy from the Bush	27
4 Making a New Beginning: School Years	34
5 More New Beginnings: Seminary Years	42
6 Learning the Ropes: Assistant Priest	49
7 Priest and Anthropologist	56
8 Kalumburu	63
9 Finding my Voice	69

2 The East Timor Story

10 East Timor's Portuguese Legacy	77
11 De Facto Independence	86
12 Tragedy of Re-colonisation	97

3 The Church Story

13 The Indonesian Church's Orphan Child	111
14 East Timor: The Church and Human Rights	120
15 Australia and the Catholic Church in East Timor	128
16 The Roar of Silence: Australian Bishops' Response to the Developing Crisis	136

PART TWO
CONVERGENCE

17	Visiting Santa Cruz with Carlos Belo	151
18	Timorese Perspectives 1992	161
19	A Voice in the Wilderness	171
20	A Wider Mission: A Bigger Challenge	183
21	East Timor and Rwanda: Culture at its Best and Worst	194
22	1996 Becomes a Very Good Year	207
23	The Battle for Minds	220
24	An Odd Little Chapter	231
25	Prelude to a Nightmare 1998–Early 1999	238
26	Hilton's Rock	252
27	Fateful Fortnight in September	258
28	The Caritas Story	271
29	Salvation, Liberation and Other Dilemmas	284
30	End of the Beginning	297
	Bibliography	310
	Index	312

CHAPTER 1

OUR STORIES DETERMINE WHO WE ARE

In September 1994, after the civil war had ended in Rwanda, I visited that country as part of a team from Caritas Internationalis (CI), the Catholic aid and development organisation. The international community had stopped the genocide but revenge killings were still common. Our group had the task of assessing where money raised by Caritas in Australia should best be spent. Our mission involved consultation with the local Church authorities, government agencies and other NGOs already in the field. It also involved travelling around the country to visit refugee camps to gain some sense of what the situation was like on the ground now that a shaky peace was in place. This carried considerable risk as armed groups still manned unofficial roadblocks. We travelled with an interpreter and driver who could speak the local language, Kinyarwanda. When the van was stopped at one of these roadblocks we could only guess at what might happen next.

When you find yourself looking down the barrel of an AK47 rifle from the ‘wrong’ end, you experience a terrible sense of powerlessness. This is amplified when the eyes of the person holding the gun have the dead expression of a killer. I had seen that stare before on Indonesian soldiers in East Timor, and also in the eyes of their locally recruited militia. We had been warned by friends in Rwanda’s capital Kigali that there was some danger associated with our journey. As a precaution, we had removed all our rings and watches. It was not uncommon in Rwanda at the time for people to have fingers and arms hacked off by machete-wielding gangs to get at these valuable objects.

Rwanda is a nominally Catholic country and, while the military had been brutalised by the events of the previous two years, they still drew the line at killing priests (and more so bishops). They understood this would bring them nothing but trouble, particularly if the bishop in question was a senior official of Caritas Internationalis¹, an aid group trying to help the people recover – or so the conversation between the soldier in charge of the road-block and our interpreter seemed to be going. At least I hoped so!

As they talked I was very conscious of two things. The first was the very large cheque ‘in my pocket’ as it were, and the second was that the whole scene was surreal! After all, I was a Catholic bishop from Melbourne Australia. How did I end up in this situation? The mind works in strange ways when confronted with the experience of total powerlessness.

¹ Caritas Internationalis is the major Catholic aid and development group. It is a confederation of national agencies situated, at the time of writing, in 165 countries. Caritas Internationalis is based in Rome for where it provides some co-ordination commensurate with the independence of the local agencies.

However, this question remained with me long after the immediate crisis was resolved and we had continued on our journey.

I was in Rwanda because Caritas Australia (CA) had run a very successful appeal for Rwanda. Catholics, but not only Catholics, had responded very generously. I had volunteered to go as part of an international team because, as the Bishop in charge of CA, I felt it was my responsibility to do so. We simply wanted to help: to supply food, shelter and medicine to those in refugee camps. But we also needed to find out how this could happen. There was little information available in Australia. Australian troops had arrived in Rwanda by the time our party assembled in Kigali. They were part of the United Nations (UN) mission, and their task was to get the hospital in Kigali into some sort of order so it could function again. The country was still in a dreadful mess. The task of Caritas was to help. That is what the Church at its best does – it helps the marginalised live with both hope and dignity. This was central to the mission of its founder. This was why I was in Rwanda, and it was why I have become involved with the peoples of East Timor, Sri Lanka and West Papua. It is a form of engagement with people on the margins. Some of my colleagues in the local priesthood have, at various times, found it difficult to understand my support for these marginalised groups.

★

I suspect that our lives have a particular trajectory that, if we are reflective, we discern slowly and often obliquely, and then only in retrospect. We all have what I would call ‘moments of destiny’ in our lives. In these brief times we sense that our life’s journey, often experienced as chaotic, has a direction. When we look back we can, if we are lucky, discern how life’s disparate elements form part of a meaningful whole. The experience is momentary, for soon daily life closes in on us again, and we find ourselves back on the familiar track, with only a memory to encourage and guide us. However, we store such memories and they help us see new significance in what we do, and thus regenerate hope within us.

While this is certainly true of individuals, as my later study of anthropology would reveal, it is also true of all sorts of human groupings. These use different methods for retaining their collective memories. Among these, ‘moments of destiny’ play a central role because they determine how a people make sense of things.

Individuals very often interpret personal ‘moments of destiny’ by connecting them to the wider narratives of the group to which they belong, and with whom they identify. The personal story takes on added significance in the context of the communal story, and in the process may actually add to it. In a sense we define ourselves by our story and the stories of which we are a part. ‘Moments of destiny’ therefore help define both who we are and what we will become.

As an Australian Catholic priest I am caught up in a number of stories, and make sense of my personal ‘moments of destiny’ within those stories. My story is shaped by them and, in turn, I have endeavoured, sometimes consciously often unconsciously, to shape these larger stories as well. As a priest one has a significant capacity to do this, but this capacity was enhanced in 1993 when I became an auxiliary bishop in Melbourne. As a bishop

you are invited into the Catholic story in new ways, some of which are exciting, others perplexing, and all inherently ambiguous. This is a theme I shall explore in the pages that follow.

★

Until 1991 my story was essentially an Australian Catholic story. My interests centered on Australia and its peoples, both indigenous and non-indigenous. The Hilton Deakin story encompassed my passions as both a churchman and an anthropologist. However what I did not know in October 1991 was that, despite the ‘moments of destiny’ that had so far set the trajectory of my life, things were about to change, and change decisively. My story was about to be caught up with that of the East Timorese, and life would never be the same again. At the time I was fifty-nine, rather late in life for a major change!

As I became involved with the East Timorese and their struggle for self-determination, I was brought into contact with many Australians and people from other countries whose passion is for justice and human rights. These are people who fight for those forced by circumstances, often not of their own choosing, to live on the margins of their society. Such people are ‘prophetic voices’ in their communities. Many of those with whom I became involved were Catholic; many were not. Almost universally, such voices are an irritant to the ordered world of bureaucrats, ecclesiastics and politicians, a challenge to the ‘wise’ men and women of academia, and the beloved (or the belittled) of the media. These people collectively could mobilise over one hundred thousand of their fellow Australians to march in support of East Timor. These I discovered were ‘my’ people, and they graciously welcomed me into their midst. On occasion I was their spokesperson.

In 1999 the East Timorese cause became a people’s movement in Australia with the people well ahead of their government in expressing solidarity with the East Timorese. In fact the protest movement developed out of disillusionment with the Australian Government’s approach. This too is a strand in the East Timor story.

★

My first meetings with the Timorese were accidental. In the 1960s I was appointed administrator of St Augustine’s church, then part of the cathedral parish, in central Melbourne. St Augustine’s ran a hospitality centre associated with the Church’s mission to seamen, many of whom were from Catholic countries. The Seamen’s Mission is part of an international network providing a place of welcome for sailors arriving in ports far from their home. Given the social nature of the encounters, friendships develop with local people, and Cupid weaves his charms. As a consequence I had officiated at the occasional Timorese wedding, but could not claim to know much about the country at all.

In October 1991, when I was Vicar General² in Melbourne, a group of East Timorese refugees came to see me to arrange a commemorative Mass for those killed since the

² The Vicar General of a diocese is a position provided for in canon law (canons 478 and 479). Its purpose is to assist the bishop in the governance of the diocese. In the absence of a bishop, the Vicar General normally assumes the administration and governance of the diocese.

1975 Indonesian invasion. Little did any of us realise at the time what lay ahead. Before we could meet again, over two hundred people, including school and university students, were gunned down in the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili.³ This excruciatingly sad event was to prove a 'moment of destiny' in all our lives, bonding us together in friendship, but it was also to prove a turning point for East Timor.

I later learned that there had been earlier and even larger massacres in East Timor. What was unique about Santa Cruz was that the event was filmed. The film was smuggled out of the country and fed to the international media. Television coverage of the event stunned the world and began the long slow process of mobilising world opinion decisively against the Indonesians. The Santa Cruz tragedy gained more media attention than had the long hard struggle of the pro-independence FRETILIN fighters. It played a significant role in putting the violations of human rights in East Timor on the international agenda (as had the Sharpeville shootings in South Africa in 1960). Indonesia's claim to East Timor was fatally wounded by the Santa Cruz massacre. This is an important part of the East Timor story and one strand I want to explore.

The massacre changed the trajectory of my life. As a moment of destiny, Santa Cruz opened up a new chapter in my story, one that would project me out of Melbourne and onto a global stage in pursuit of human rights. It was also the reason I found myself looking down the barrel of a killer's gun and feeling very vulnerable on a lonely road outside Kigali.

★

There are many excellent accounts of East Timor's story, for instance in books by James Dunn, Jill Jolliffe, James C Taylor, Lansell Taudevin and Irena Cristalis,⁴ to name but a few. The interest driving these books is essentially humanitarian and political. Cristalis has an anthropological interest as well. My interest, however, while it has elements in common with theirs, differs in some significant respects. My critique of these accounts is that they are essentially Western in their cultural orientation, and seem to assume that the East Timorese experience can be explained by appeal to Western standards. This misinterprets East Timorese culture, and thus key elements in their story, particularly the role religion plays in Timorese culture. Culture itself is a key element in the story. It is an element that the Indonesians failed to understand, and many Indonesian soldiers lost their lives as a consequence of this misunderstanding, not to mention many thousands of East Timorese. Invaders always seem to underestimate the power of indigenous cultures, to their peril. This was one thing the U.S. got right in the Pacific war, even if subsequently they have forgotten the lessons learned there.⁵

My interest is in the way religion and politics came together in East Timor as the

3 I was given a list containing 273 names of persons killed. I believe there were many more.

4 Jill Jolliffe *East Timor: Nationalism and Colonialism* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1978); John Taylor *Indonesia's Forgotten War: The Hidden History of East Timor* (London: Zed Books, 1992); James Dunn *Timor: A People Betrayed* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1996); Lansell Taudevin *East Timor: Too Little Too Late* (Sydney: Duffy and Snellgrove, 1999); Irena Cristalis *Bitter Dawn: East Timor - a People's Story* (London: Zed Books, 2002).

5 See Edward T Hall's classic *The Silent Language* (New York: Anchor Press, 1973) for an account of the role anthropologists played in the Pacific in the aftermath of World War II.

struggle for independence unfolded. The catalyst event at Santa Cruz cemetery in 1991, for instance, was a religious ceremony also used as a vehicle for political protest against Indonesian repression. When the shooting started at Santa Cruz, many of the survivors immediately made their way to the bishop's compound seeking sanctuary. It was the bishop who negotiated with the military for them to leave. It was a Catholic priest who retrieved film of the event hidden in the Santa Cruz cemetery. It was another Catholic priest who arranged to have it smuggled to Darwin the next day. As this case illustrates, religion did not play a role at the borders of the struggle; it was integral to its eventual success. It often sustained people when all earthly hope had gone. This is a part of the story that needs to be acknowledged.⁶

★

The events in East Timor occurred at an important time in the Church's own story, and this runs as sub-text to the relationship between the local Catholic Church in East Timor and the local Catholic Church in Indonesia. It also plays as sub-text in the apparently poor treatment successive leaders of the Church in East Timor were given by Vatican diplomats whose role was compromised by a severe conflict of interest in that they sought to mollify the Indonesian Government at the expense of the East Timorese Church community whom it was their responsibility to support. This too is part of the story.

A decade after the Second Vatican Council (1962-5), the Catholic Church was still in a state of flux as leaders in Australia sought to understand and implement its decrees, many of which were quite radical at the time, particularly those dealing with Church and state. The Church's proper role in the public square was far from clear or settled at the time.

Until 1963 when Pope John XXIII published his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (*Peace on Earth*), virtually on his deathbed, the Catholic Church had never formally acknowledged in its social teaching the existence of 'human rights' as set out in the UN Charter. This changed dramatically at the Second Vatican Council where, in a major document dealing with the Church's role in the modern world,⁷ the language of rights is used freely, and includes not only individual rights but also recognition of a people's right to their culture. Pope Paul VI took Catholic teaching further in his Apostolic Letter of 1971 (*Octogesima Adveniens*) in suggesting that two aspirations drive the thrust to recognise human rights: the aspirations for equality and for participation (#22). He goes on to say:

Through the statement of the rights of man and the seeking for international agreements for the application of these rights, progress has been made towards inscribing these two aspirations in deeds and structures. Nevertheless various forms of discrimination continually reappear – ethnic, cultural, religious, political

6 Catholic priest Patrick A. Smythe examined the role of the Church in the independence struggle in his PhD thesis, subsequently published as *'The Heaviest Blow' - The Catholic Church and the East Timor Issue* (Munster: LitVerlag, 2004). While the framework of his study is heavily theological, the book is an important resource in telling the story of the Church in East Timor's struggle for self-determination, not the least because of the many interviews he conducted with key participants.

7 Vatican Council II *Gaudium et Spes* (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*) has 36 reference to rights.

and so on. In fact, human rights are still too often disregarded, if not scoffed at, or else they receive only formal recognition... (*Octogesima Adveniens* #23)

In a relatively short time, the Church went from rejecting human rights as a creature of the Enlightenment, to declaring itself a champion of human rights. Its stance would move even more firmly in this direction again under John Paul II, who became pope in 1978, three years after the Indonesian invasion of East Timor. The rapid development of Catholic social teaching caught many bishops flat-footed when it came to its application in their local contexts. This meant that, in the case of the Australian and Indonesian bishops, both groups were very slow to react to a crisis unfolding on their respective doorsteps. This too is part of the East Timorese story.

The story also has to embrace the contribution from the Church in East Timor itself. The local Church had been only recently separated from Macau and placed under the charge of an Apostolic Administrator, when it had to deal with the ambiguities of the Japanese invasion, and without Australian help its clergy and religious would have been wiped out.⁸ With the end of the war, the Portuguese returned and the 'Australian connection' was severed. In East Timor Church leaders again took Church-state relationships as defined in Portugal as the norm. When the fascist Salazar regime was finally overthrown in 1974, the bishop in East Timor, Jose Ribeiro (1918-2002), misread 'the signs of the times'. He believed that the future of the colony lay with Indonesia whose propaganda he gullibly swallowed, only to become totally disillusioned when the Indonesians invaded.

Fortunately, and perhaps providentially, the Church was then headed successively by two leaders, Monsignor da Costa Lopes and Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, outstanding for their raw courage in dealing with a dangerous situation. While Belo's work for peace deservedly led to international acknowledgement, da Costa Lopes was made out of the same stern stuff as Australia's Mary MacKillop. Rarely has an important Church leader been so shabbily and unjustly treated by his peers in the Church. Yet da Costa Lopes served his people and the Church devotedly despite this. He was a man of great faith.

The Church is more than its leaders, important though their role is. Timorese priests, often with very deficient training, worked under appalling conditions and levels of surveillance following the Indonesian invasion. As the number of Catholics doubled, then trebled, and continued to grow exponentially, their position became impossible, yet they continued to mobilise lay catechists to meet the spiritual needs of their people. All of this is part of the story I wish to acknowledge.

As events unfolded, the local Catholic Church played an important role at key junctures in East Timor's struggle. This has gone largely unacknowledged in the English-speaking world. It is part of the East Timor story that needs to be told in the interests of balance. It says something important about the Catholic Church, what it is, how it functions, and the way it engages in the public square.

The Catholic Church's claim to be 'a champion of human rights' in the 1980s rested on less-than-firm foundations. These strengthened substantially when John Paul II became a decisive figure in the overthrow of communism in Eastern Europe. They firmed up again when da Costa Lopes and Belo began the task of undermining the moral basis of the

⁸ Many Timorese clergy and religious were evacuated to Australia and remained there till hostilities ceased.

Indonesian policy about integration (*integrasi*) by their defence of the human rights of the East Timorese so badly abused in the name of *integrasi*. The power of the Indonesians in the end could not overcome this defence. All of this is essential to the interplay of stories I wish to address. The Catholic Church became more fully the Church of Jesus through its engagement with East Timor. The East Timorese on the other hand became more able to enjoy and express a fuller humanity through their engagement with the Church. The relationship was one of reciprocity.

★

My view of the Church's role in East Timor is one from the margins rather than the mainstream. The main current of international Church life did not flow through East Timor in the period we are discussing; it was regarded as an ecclesiastical backwater. Furthermore, in the eyes of many Indonesian clergy, especially the Javanese, Timor, whether East or West, was regarded as primitive, a place where the people had 'just come out of the trees', as one Indonesian cleric expressed it to me, and so did not share their much superior Javanese culture. These clergy came to East Timor in support of the *transmigrasi*, and only saw what they expected to see. This further fuelled Indonesia's worldwide propaganda aimed at concealing what was happening in East Timor in the name of *integrasi*. Theirs was an unwitting contribution to the suffering of the East Timorese. This is also part of the story I wish to tell.

I became involved with the East Timorese, more or less by accident. As I worked with their leaders, I soon found myself sharing the marginalised position of East Timor's two great Church leaders, Monsignor Martinho da Costa Lopes and Bishop Carlos Belo. While some of my colleague bishops were wondering 'What is Hills up to?', a number were dead set against my involvement, and seemed to resent my friendship with Belo. The situation reflected tensions within the Catholic Church here in Australia that I inadvertently dragged into the East Timorese story. Another part of my account! This account therefore inevitably carries with it a certain bias (as indeed do most accounts). My reputed left-wing orientation has its source in a concern for people, a legacy of my professional involvement as an anthropologist specialising in indigenous peoples. That is an important part of my personal story, and one of which I am very proud.

While da Costa Lopes and Belo were from different generations, they were united in a common concern. *They put the interests of their people first*. That is to say, their concern lay first and foremost in people. In Belo's case, not surprisingly given his Salesian background, his major concern was the welfare of young people. The demands of the institution, important as these were, ran in second place to the needs of people. Belo and I became good friends because we both recognised that *pastoral needs have to take precedence in a crisis*.

★

The Catholic Church played an important role in the David and Goliath struggle of the people of East Timor to exercise their right to self-determination. The struggle was to cost tens of thousands of lives, most of them Catholic, some as a direct result of violence,

others from malnutrition and poor health care, but all the consequence of resistance to Indonesian rule.⁹ The Indonesian ‘adventure’ in East Timor virtually annihilated two generations of young people.

However, the tragedy did not stop there. Once the referendum on self-determination was decided, with close to eighty percent of those living in East Timor voting in favor of independence,¹⁰ the Indonesians wreaked their revenge on the East Timorese, transporting many thousands against their will to West Timor and other islands in the archipelago, so that those East Timorese who favored *integrasi* could depart in relative safety, plundering unhindered as they went.¹¹ The Indonesians used their militias to torch the country.



The Church’s position in this saga was always complex and sometimes compromised, so the story of its involvement contains both light and shade. The Indonesian invasion and the policy of *Pancasila*¹² forced the East Timorese to choose a religious allegiance, and the majority chose to become Catholic. At the beginning of the crisis approximately one-third of East Timorese were nominally Catholic; by its end, over ninety-five percent were Catholic. Something extraordinary was going on. The story of the Church’s role has to interpret this historic change.

There have been various efforts to explain why this mass conversion occurred. Xanana Gusmao suggested the ‘conversions’ were as much about nationalism as about religion; another suggestion is that the East Timorese became Catholic as a protest against the Javanese, who were Muslim; both these explanations have some merit. However, there is also the view put forward by Belo, that in the face of suffering on a scale that encompassed almost every family in the country, a people collectively attuned to mysticism by their native animism, made sense of their suffering in terms of the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus, a central element in the Christian experience. The Church was led by native Timorese clergy who stayed with their people *and shared their suffering* so that, in the period 1975-1999, the East Timorese Catholic Church became *a church of the people* with leaders who put themselves at risk for the welfare of their people. I witnessed this development at first hand after 1992.

The Church was universally recognised as the *only body that could protect people* from arbitrary Indonesian violence. It did this at both the practical level through mediation, and engaging in a dialogue with the Indonesian commanders about the abuse of human rights.

9 The estimates of the numbers of deaths in East Timor vary enormously, not least because of the difficulty of establishing accurately the original numbers of the East Timorese population. A well regarded source is that of the CAVR Report (Report of the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation entitled *Chega! (No more Stop Enough!)*. It puts the number in excess of 100,000 between 1974 and 1999. <http://www.cavr-timorleste.org/en/cheгаReport.htm>

This report provides the lower level of estimates. Others would put the number much higher at around 200,000. See discussion in Chapter 2.

10 Despite political differences among them, in 1999 the vote in favour of independence of East Timorese living in Australia was almost 100%.

11 Maliana, the principal town in the western border region, was ‘deconstructed’ as *integrasi* supporters retreating to West Timor stripped everything moveable and of value, including the roofing and window frames of buildings. All that remained were the shells.

12 Pancasila meaning ‘Five Principles’ is the philosophical foundation of the Indonesian state. It was first articulated by Sukarno in 1945. See www.indonesianembassy.org.uk/human_right-2.htm

The response varied. It would be wrong to think that all Indonesian military commanders supported violence as the way to bring about *integrasi*. However those opposed to violence were always in the minority, since East Timor was from the outset a project of the military 'hawks' and their prestige (and wealth) depended on its success. One of the most notorious of these was a Catholic, as were some of his principal strategists. This too is part of the story.

The triumph of the Catholic Church in East Timor was that, against all the odds, it became a Church of the *maubere*, of 'the ordinary East Timorese', most of whom had become marginalised in their own country. The Church in East Timor under Belo's leadership became a people's movement and, as such, was able to do things that many institutions can no longer do, and that is command public respect. Whether the Church can retain this respect post-independence seems an open question at the present time.

My argument is that during the Indonesian occupation, *both* the Catholic Church and the resistance movements kept hope alive, but by totally different means.

★

What follows is my tale told in the context of many other more important tales, all of which encompass the great suffering that the East Timorese had to endure for a quarter of a century. To put this all in some perspective, if you had been fifteen at the time of the invasion in 1975, you most probably would not have survived, but if you did, then you would have been approaching forty when the vote for independence was taken!

There is a lesson here for every person: our stories define who we are and so are meaningful, precious, and worth sharing. Our personal stories take on heightened meaning from the bigger stories of which they are part. These bigger stories shape our culture and sense of who we are. Keeping these bigger stories alive is important not only for us as individuals, but also to who we are as a people. The Catholic Church's involvement in East Timor is one of these bigger stories.