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FOURTH COMMITTEE  
13th meeting  
held on  
Monday, 22 October 1979  
at 10.30 a.m.  
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 13th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BOYA (Benin)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS (A/C.4/34/3/Add.5 and A/C.4/34/9)

1. The CHAIRMAN informed the members of the Committee that he had received a communication from Mr. Noam Chomsky containing a request for a hearing concerning the question of East Timor (A/C.4/34/3/Add.5) and in that connexion, he drew attention to a letter from the Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations (A/C.4/34/5/Add.3).
2. Mr. JUWANA (Indonesia) said that his delegation's position concerning requests by petitioners for hearings on the question of East Timor was well known. He wished to emphasize his strong opposition to granting Mr. Noam Chomsky's request for a hearing by the Committee as a petitioner, since it could serve no useful purpose. He asked that his delegation's position should be recorded in the summary record.
3. The CHAIRMAN assured the representative of Indonesia that his statement would be duly recorded, and suggested that the Committee should grant Mr. Chomsky's request (A/C.4/34/3/Add.5).
4. It was so decided.
5. The CHAIRMAN said that he had also received a request for a hearing from the Reverend G. Michael Scott concerning the questions of Southern Rhodesia and Namibia; he suggested that the Committee should grant the request.
6. It was so decided.
7. The CHAIRMAN informed the members of the Committee that he had received another communication containing a request for a hearing relating to the question of East Timor. In accordance with the usual practice, he suggested that the communication should be circulated as a Committee document and be considered at a subsequent meeting.
8. It was so decided.

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9. Mr. FUTSCHER PEREIRA (Portugal) said that, since 25 April 1975, Portugal had always pursued the aim of decolonizing the Territories under its administration, in compliance with the principle that all peoples under colonial rule should be able to exercise their right to self-determination and independence, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. The fact remained that Portugal was still regarded as the administering Power of East Timor, even though the conditions prevailing in the Territory prevented it from exercising its responsibilities in that capacity.

(Mr. Futscher Pereira, Portugal)

10. His country was making no claim - political, territorial, economic, strategic or any other - to East Timor, and it was not for material or selfish reasons that it had denounced the military intervention of Indonesia in that Territory and had raised the question in the United Nations. Its sole purpose had been, and still was, to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of the Timorese people.

11. Four years after the military intervention by Indonesia in East Timor, the tragic situation in that Territory was far from coming to an end, and, although it had recently been alleged that the people of Timor were living in peace and prosperity, there was reason to believe that they were facing serious humanitarian problems. It appeared that there were still a great many displaced persons, that the health situation was steadily deteriorating, and that the number of persons in need of food and shelter was reaching alarming proportions. In that connexion, some specialized agencies and humanitarian bodies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross could provide invaluable assistance to the people of East Timor. Nor should the possibility be ruled out of organizing an international movement of solidarity to relieve the material hardships of the people.

12. Nothing could be done, however, as long as Indonesia maintained a position which had been condemned by the General Assembly with all its political and moral weight. He therefore appealed urgently to Indonesia to reconsider its attitude, for a real solution to those and other similar problems could be found only by applying a legal and political formula that would take genuine account of the legitimate rights and interests of the people of East Timor and their real aspirations, freely expressed, and that would at the same time be acceptable to the international community.

13. Mr. VERRET (Haiti) said that the question of East Timor was one of the most important decolonization problems before the Committee since it was a case where the principles embodied in the United Nations Charter had not been respected. Member States were aware of the complexity of the question, for the situation was a threat to world peace and represented a crisis in the relations between two neighbouring peoples which, if it continued, might seriously endanger international security.

14. His delegation was conscious of the very difficult situation that had existed in East Timor on the departure of the colonial Power, Portugal, and realized that there could be no effective solution to the problem without the co-operation of all the parties concerned and a sincere desire on their part to promote friendly relations with respect for the principles embodied in the Charter and in General Assembly resolutions. If there was to be peace in the world, oppressed peoples must be able to express their wishes freely and to choose the path that suited them, free from constraint.

15. Without going into the origin of the conflict between the Republic of Indonesia and the Frente Revolucionária de Timor Leste Independente (FRETILIN), it had been recognized that the events following the withdrawal of the colonial Power had prevented the people of Timor from exercising their right to self-determination properly. The Indonesian troops, which deserved high praise for the valiant

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(Mr. Verret, Haiti)

struggle they had waged in the dark days of colonialism to free their country from foreign oppression, had been sent to East Timor, benefiting from the confusion that had prevailed in the Territory at that time.

16. His delegation did not underestimate the historical, geographical and ethnic ties that existed between the peoples of Indonesia and of East Timor, nor was it unaware of the fact that, in view of those ties, the entry of Indonesian troops into Timor might have been welcomed by part of the population. But FRETILIN had not taken that view, and there seemed to be grounds for believing that the people of Timor had not in fact exercised their right to self-determination in accordance with the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

17. Accordingly, the General Assembly, at its thirty-third session, had adopted resolution 33/39, in which it had recalled that the Security Council had asked Indonesia to withdraw its troops from the Territory of East Timor. There was no doubt that if that resolution was implemented, it would be possible to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the problem by giving FRETILIN the freedom to decide, without foreign intervention, whether or not it wished to be integrated into the Republic of Indonesia. His delegation had supported that resolution, which it considered extremely judicious, and hoped that all delegations would press for its immediate implementation. If there could be such common action, it would strengthen the effectiveness of the United Nations. It would only be possible to promote peace in the world and to abolish the hotbeds of tension that were spreading all over the globe, if all States, large and small, rich and poor, accepted the supreme authority of the United Nations and respected its decisions.

18. His delegation was gratified that the question of East Timor had been the subject of a detailed study and of appropriate resolutions, and it would support any new initiative by the General Assembly and the Security Council to deal with the crisis and to restore to the two countries concerned, at a decisive moment in their history, the peace and harmony necessary for the economic development of all peoples and the social evolution of all men, wherever they lived, so that a harmonious balance could finally be established in international relations. It was high time that East Timor freely exercised its right to self-determination and independence, and that the long-standing dispute, which could do nothing but harm to both the countries concerned, came to an end. Such a solution would represent no more than justice, since it would be in accordance with world public opinion as reflected in the decisions of the United Nations.

19. Mr. DORN (Suriname) said he had always considered that the Fourth Committee was not competent to deal with the matter under consideration as the people of East Timor had already exercised their right to self-determination by deciding to return to the political and cultural fold of Indonesia.

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(Mr. Dorn, Suriname)

20. His delegation had always been surprised to see that the important General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV) had never enjoyed the same prominence as its illustrious companion, resolution 1514 (XV), adopted on the same day. Resolution 1541 (XV) clearly stipulated, however, that when a people exercised its right to self-determination, it could choose between independence, association with an independent State or integration with an independent State. Thus, in choosing integration with the Republic of Indonesia, the people of East Timor had exercised a legitimate choice, as it had the right to do.

21. He considered that the United Nations should concentrate on the real interests of the people of East Timor so that there could be an adequate response to their material needs. He would be happy to see more activity on the part of UNDP and other specialized agencies and development agencies in that Territory, which the former colonial Power had left in a state of almost complete impoverishment. He wished to emphasize, however, that the consent of the Indonesian Government must be obtained before such assistance was provided.

22. His delegation did not believe that it would help to further the interests of the people of East Timor to hold a debate on the subject every year.

#### HEARING OF PETITIONERS

##### Question of East Timor

23. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Pires (União Democrática Timorense - UDT) and Miss Traube took places at the petitioners' table.

24. Miss TRAUBE said that she did not claim to speak on behalf of the people of East Timor, because she was not their designated spokesperson but, as an anthropologist, she wished to describe the depth, complexity and vitality of the culture of the East Timorese people and to explain their very unique concept of political reality and of the world.

25. From October 1972 to November 1974, she had conducted research on what had then been called the overseas province of Portuguese Timor. During that period, she had been located in the administrative district (concelho) of Aileu, south of the capital of Dili. That district, together with those of Ermera, Ainaro and Same, comprised the territory of an ethnic group known as the Mambai, who numbered over 80,000 people and who lived in the mountains, eking out a subsistence existence from agriculture and animal husbandry.

26. By the end of 1974, three political associations, the União Democrática Timorense (UDT), the Associação Popular Democrática (APODETI) and FRETILIN, had been formed in Dili and had begun to extend their operations into the mountains. At that time, the population had not become affiliated with any political party, but, of the three, FRETILIN appeared to have the greatest chance of achieving broad popular support. The political ideology and tactics of FRETILIN had been based

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(Miss Traube)

on a concept of political development, whereby there should be interaction between the predominantly Western-educated leadership and the indigenous cultures. Although such interaction was difficult to achieve, the over-all orientation of FRETILIN seemed consistent with the real conditions for East Timorese nationalism. If the Portuguese had remained in the Territory to supervise the decolonization process, FRETILIN would probably have won a political victory.

27. The overthrow of the Caetano Government in April 1974 sent a shock throughout the Territory and as a result, long before the first UDT and FRETILIN spokesmen had reached the interior, the Mambai had undertaken a broad debate on their future. Obviously, the words "colonialism", "decolonization", "independence" and "self-determination" had not been part of everyday language in the mountains, as the language for discussing the future had been drawn from mythology rather than from Western political and legal traditions. The political concepts of the Mambai had been based primarily on the fundamental concepts of rule, hierarchy and order.

28. For the Timorese, the main cause for concern had been an eventual Portuguese withdrawal. The Portuguese had been mythological characters for the Mambai, and their possible departure had been viewed as a challenge to the established order. That order, which had been incorporated in a narrative tradition referred to as the "walk of the flag", constituted the mythological foundations of an entire socio-political system.

29. In fact, according to the myth of the creation of the world, the Timorese and their younger brothers, the Portuguese, had been born on the sacred mountain of origins located at the centre of the island, but the Portuguese had vanished over the seas, taking with them the symbols of their sovereignty; their elder brothers, the Timorese, had remained on the island, had established their realms and had continued to perform their ritual functions. The ancestors of the Timorese had then crossed the oceans to Portugal, where they had asked their younger brothers to return the flag to its original homeland and to establish an order of sovereignty. The Portuguese had agreed and had sailed to Dili, where they had been welcomed with widespread joy. That event had inaugurated a new régime, in which the Portuguese had assumed responsibility for defending the jural order, while the Timorese had retained their ancient ritual function of maintaining cosmological balance. In that way, Portuguese rule had become integrated into the traditional local structures.

30. In the early stages of colonial occupation, the Portuguese had contracted alliances with local rulers, granting honorary titles and insignia in exchange for commercial and military co-operation. At the beginning of the twentieth century, those alliances had been extended and codified into a system of tribute, which the colonial administration collected. However, that system had subsequently been replaced by a head tax, which had upset traditions and severely undermined the legitimacy of Portuguese rule. Nevertheless, for historical and cultural reasons, the Timorese had remained very attached to the order established by the Portuguese. In fact, for them, the established order had been sacred and could only be modified through rituals, and the process followed in resolving issues had been considered just as important as the eventual outcome.

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(Miss Traube)

31. In 1974, the Mambai had not eagerly anticipated the prospect of decolonization. However, since that process had been inevitable, they had accepted the need to find an alternative to colonial order and to ensure that succession resulted from a collective decision, taken in accordance with traditions, particularly with the "walk of the flag". They had called for the convening of a series of meetings, at which the Portuguese and the Timorese could express their views and reach a consensus. In other words, the people of East Timor had implicitly espoused a process of self-determination.

32. It was therefore apparent that the people of East Timor had the ability and willingness to engage in a discussion concerning their future. Their abilities had been fully demonstrated, well before the Indonesian occupation. Professor Forman, who had spent 15 months with the Makassae of East Timor, had stated that, if given the opportunity, the people of East Timor were perfectly capable of expressing a political choice.

33. With regard to Indonesia's claims to sovereignty over East Timor, they seemed legitimate, if viewed from a purely cultural point of view and abstracted from their historical context. There were, in fact, close resemblances between the various cultures of East Timor and those of the Republic of Indonesia. However, contemporary East Timor was the product of a colonial history, which had ultimately differentiated between the eastern half of Timor and the rest of the archipelago. The territorial division imposed by the Netherlands and Portugal was an historical fact, which should serve as a basis for the demarcation of post-colonial boundaries. There were, of course, objective differences in the demographic, ecological, economic, social and political conditions, but, more significantly, the people of East Timor did not consider that their own interests necessarily coincided with those of the Indonesian people, from whom they had been separated by history. Accordingly, the current nationalist movement was part of the historical evolution of the Timorese culture.

34. With regard to a different aspect of the question, the cultural aspect of history, it would be a mistake to condemn the Timorese peoples' respect for Portuguese rule merely as a "product of colonialism" or an instance of "colonial indoctrination". Such a view would ignore the cultural traditions of the Timorese and would relegate them to a passive role. The creative interaction between the Mambai traditional culture and the European culture had generated a unique cultural identity, which was currently part of East Timorese reality.

35. Of course, it could be argued, along the same lines, that the Indonesian occupation of East Timor might someday generate new models that could legitimize the new system of foreign rule, because, although the Indonesians were currently foreigners in East Timor, the early Portuguese colonizers had been foreigners, also. However, in view of the dramatic circumstances surrounding East Timor's

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(Miss Traube)

"integration" into the Republic of Indonesia, the situation was completely different today. When the Indonesians had intervened in East Timorese affairs, a national identity had been in the process of taking shape, as was apparent in the FRETILIN struggle since 1974. The Timorese were currently aware of their unity as a people. If the crisis continued to escalate, there was reason to fear that the very survival of the indigenous cultures would be threatened, and cultural diversity could be a source of productive exchange.

36. The current choice lay either in repeating the colonial past in a different, much more destructive, form or in acknowledging the right of the East Timorese people to determine their own future, free from foreign interference. She called upon both the United Nations and the Republic of Indonesia to pursue the latter course, for she was firmly convinced that it would serve the mutual interests of the Indonesian and East Timorese peoples.

37. Mr. PIRES (União Democrática Timorense) (UDT) said that the purpose of his statement was to provide the Committee with concrete information about the actual situation in East Timor and about the aspirations of the Timorese people, and to appeal to the United Nations to protect the rights of small countries that had no way of defending themselves. The question of East Timor had been dragging on since 1975, and he was convinced that the United Nations could make a decisive contribution to restoring legality to the Territory.

38. Summarizing the events that had occurred since 1975-1976, before and after the Indonesian intervention, he explained that he had participated actively in the work of various political parties - UDT, APODETI, the Klibur Oan Timur Aswain (KOTA) and the Partido Trabalhista - which together had drawn up what had been called the "document of the 31 items". Although Indonesia had accepted that document, it had never been put into practice. In November 1975, he had headed a delegation to certain Western countries, namely, the Netherlands, Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, France and Italy and, upon his return, had found a provisional pro-Indonesia Government installed in Dili.

39. The taking of Dili had not been, as the Indonesian Government would have the world believe, the action of Indonesian volunteers coming to the aid of their Timorese brothers, but rather a military victory. Timorese who had rejected political integration with Indonesia had been denied access to social services, and Timorese refugees in Indonesia had been subjected to all kinds of pressures and reprisals. The Timorese had tried by every possible means to survive and be evacuated to Portugal. It had proved extremely difficult to carry out the evacuation of the refugees, as the Ambassador of the Netherlands, who represented Portuguese interests in Indonesia, could attest. It was at that time that he (Mr. Pires) had refused to co-operate with the provisional Government and had assumed leadership of a refugees committee set up to seek assistance from international organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross.

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40. The question of East Timor had obviously not been settled given Indonesia's failure to accept the resolutions adopted by the United Nations and the continued repudiation by the people of East Timor of integration with Indonesia. Indonesia had attempted to convince the world that the process of decolonization in East Timor had been completed on 17 July 1976 in accordance with the spirit and the letter of General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV).

41. It was essential to know how the representatives of the Popular Assembly which had proclaimed the integration of East Timor into Indonesia as the latter's twenty-seventh state had been chosen, and the psychological atmosphere in which the Popular Assembly had met. An individual currently serving in a high post in the Government of East Timor had stated that the Popular Assembly had been nothing but a puppet assembly, that its members had been recruited by force and that most of them had had no administrative ability whatsoever. In any event, the Popular Assembly had not been elected by the people. It had been set up in great haste and it had been that Assembly which had issued the request for integration.

42. It was inconceivable that a democratic electoral process could be conducted during an open war. At that time, 90 per cent of the Territory had been under the control of the forces of the resistance and even the towns occupied by the invaders were not secure, as they had passed from the control of one side to the other from day to day. To speak of democratic elections in such circumstances was plainly absurd. As to the proclamation of the integration of East Timor into the Republic of Indonesia, not even the most naive person could believe it. The leaders of UDT, KOTA and the Partido Trabalhista who had signed the documents had done so only because they had feared for their lives.

43. It had been argued, moreover, that the Territory of East Timor was poor and small and, hence, could not survive as an independent country. That argument was incompatible with the principle of the liberty of nations. The Special Committee of 24 and its Sub-Committee on Small Territories had clearly stated that neither size, nor isolation nor limited resources should delay a Territory's attainment of independence. The Committee of 24 had also emphasized the importance of increasing assistance to small Territories so that they could develop and improve their economic potential and enable their inhabitants to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. In any event, there were a great many countries which were even smaller and poorer than East Timor.

44. In its efforts to convince the people, the Indonesian authorities argued that East Timor was an integral part of Indonesia because the Indonesians and the Timorese belonged to the same race. However, the Indonesian empire itself was a mosaic in geographical, cultural, anthropological and historical terms. The Timorese people did not in the least feel integrated with the Indonesian people or identify with them. That was why the struggle was continuing, even if the authorities refused to admit it.

(Mr. Pires, UDT)

45. The government official referred to earlier had stated that the entire Timorese people desired peace and the withdrawal of the Indonesians. The Timorese people wanted Portugal to return to decolonize East Timor and give it its independence. The Indonesian soldiers, for their part, were committing flagrant violations of human rights. The Timorese people had been decimated by military attacks, by sickness and, more recently, by its worst enemy, hunger. Those were the weapons which the Indonesian masters were currently using. Although the war was still being waged if a foreign delegation appeared, all military matériel, military vehicles and soldiers were hidden. If the delegation visited a hospital, the war wounded were kept out of sight.

46. The Timorese who had not adopted Indonesian citizenship were considered foreigners in their own country. Those who retained Portuguese nationality had lost all their rights, and the International Committee of the Red Cross had visited the Territory in April 1979 to ascertain who wanted to leave the country. The Indonesian Government, however, would not issue exit permits, not even to persons wishing to rejoin their families abroad, and it did not allow the independent foreign press to visit the Territory. All the while, the war went on because the Timorese people had a bitter hatred for the invader.

47. According to letters received from Dili, apparently half the population had perished during the conflict. The 1974 census had shown the population of East Timor to be 688,771. In 1978, after four years of war, only 329,271 inhabitants were left. How many would there be three or four years hence?

48. The war in Timor had already lasted four years and the end was still not in sight. How was it that the island of Timor, despite its total isolation from the world, despite the lack of any prospect of receiving outside aid, and despite the fact that it was politically divided, was still capable of opposing an army as strong as the Indonesian army? The reason was that the battle that was being waged was historic, heroic, national and nationalistic.

49. It was heroic because it was being waged against everything and everyone: against the Territory's geographical isolation and against all countries which knew the terrible sufferings of the Timorese people and yet did not speak out. It was national because the entire nation was, as one man, resisting Indonesia either by arms or by passive resistance and psychological warfare. It was nationalistic because it was a struggle for freedom and self-determination and not for an ideology. The right of peoples to self-determination was a sacred right which had to be respected and could not be negotiated or debated, since it was beyond political ideologies and strategies.

50. UDT represented the Timorese people who were suffering in silence without any possibility of demanding justice. UDT was the voice of a people prepared to sacrifice its life for the principles and values which the United Nations itself had enshrined in its Charter. For that reason, UDT appealed to the United Nations

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(Mr. Pires, UDT)

to make every effort to find a solution to the question of East Timor. It appealed to the Portuguese and Indonesian Governments to recognize their historic responsibilities and assist the people of Timor to build their future in peace and freedom. The Timorese people sincerely believed in the goodwill of Indonesia and Portugal, and hoped that Indonesia, which had won the admiration of the world at the Bandung Conference - and lost that admiration as a result of its military intervention in Timor - would reconsider its position, assume once again the role of pioneer and champion of the right of peoples, and restore freedom to the Timorese people, enabling it to exercise its right to self-determination and independence.

51. Miss Traube and Mr. Pires withdrew.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.