

Peace Building: The Challenge for East Timor

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STUART REES INTRODUCTION TO THE XANANA GUSMAO LECTURE

Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Stuart Rees. I am the current director of the Sydney Peace Foundation. Welcome to the Sydney Peace Prize lecture for the year 2000. I first of all want to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the Eora People. It is important to make that acknowledgement in any discussion about the politics of identity, in any journey towards reconciliation. I also want to acknowledge the large number of people in this audience who have kept the East Timorese issue on the agenda for several decades. There will be an opportunity to say more about that and to thank them in a book launch that will follow this lecture.

The Sydney Peace Foundation is an important coalition between people from the media, from the world of business, from public sector institutions and from academia. We think that the issue of peace and the attainment of peace with justice is the moral, educational, political priority of this century, and we are proud to stage this particular peace prize lecture, followed by the award of the peace prize tomorrow evening. Two years ago, the winner of the Sydney Peace Prize was the revolutionary banker Muhammad Yunus, whose theme was "Peace is freedom from poverty". Last year, and I suspect many of the people in this auditorium will remember, the winner was one of giants of the twentieth century, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu whose theme was "Peace through Reconciliation".

This evening we welcome Xanana Gusmao, who was born in Manatuto, East Timor. Whose primary schooling was conducted in a remote part of East Timor with absolutely no modern utilities, and whose secondary education was conducted mostly in a seminary in Dare in the hills above Dili. Who at a certain stage of his adulthood, after conscription into the Portuguese forces, might have emigrated to Australia. In fact he was on the verge of doing that, but thank goodness for Falintil and thank goodness for Timor and I would say thank goodness for the world, he became involved in slowly developing a philosophy about the notion of liberation and the notion of independence. And the rest, in a way, is history. He spent sixteen years in the mountains on the run from the Indonesian army and I think developed a political theory and a philosophy which is captured by the title of his autobiography: "To resist is to win". He was captured in 1992 by the Indonesian Army, and was sentenced to life imprisonment, at which

point the Sydney Morning Herald, in a memorable editorial, described him as the new Mandela. It's a reference to his courage, it's a reference to his vision, it's a reference to his poetry, because a person of great creativity, a painter and a poet wears his authority easily, and talks easily the language and the philosophy of non-violence. After his seven years in prison, he's emerged to be obviously the nominal leader of his country, and when you go to Dili it seems to me that every other T-shirt has his name on the back. It's now my great pleasure to invite him to give the 2000 Peace Prize Lecture on "Peacebuilding: the Challenge for East Timor".

Professor Stuart Rees, 9 November 2000

Xanana Gusmao.

On behalf of the people of East Timor I want to express my deepest gratitude to the organisers of the Sydney Peace Prize. By affording this opportunity to express our ideas about peace-building in East Timor, it is my hope and my wish that new understandings leading to creative solutions will emerge.

A quarter of a century after resisting the most brutal occupation of their beloved country, the people of Timor Lorosa'e finally won the right to be free from war. The first challenge we faced was to defend this right. Peace-keepers, initially led by Australia, helped us respond to this challenge. Now peace-keeping forces from many nations serve in all thirteen districts of Timor Lorosa'e, and we remain truly grateful to them and to their families.

Following on from peace-keeping, our next challenge is peace-building. Again, through UNTAET, the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor, we have the assistance of many countries. We also have many international non-government organisations providing much-welcome aid. But, as with peace-keeping, the task of building a lasting peace is ultimately *our* responsibility, and one that only *we*, the East Timorese, can realise.

For the past year we have been working under the mandate of UNTAET in order to prepare ourselves for independence.

Many efforts were made to guarantee this passage to independence. However, there is still much to be done, particularly with regard to the involvement of the Timorese; there is still much to be corrected and much to be promoted in order to prevent a heavy bureaucracy from impeding the implementation of practical programs of reconstruction.

In addition to the establishment of a government structure and the need for the implementation of programs, there is still the political process of registration of parties, elections for the Constituent Assembly and the mechanism for the study and debate of the Constitution.

The National Council, a body through which we gain practical experience of the workings of a future National Assembly, will soon carry out an objective and honest evaluation of the first year of the transition to independence, followed by the setting of a timetable for full independence which will be achieved towards the end of next year.

All of these efforts aim at ensuring a democratic system where the rule of law is the guarantee of enduring peace and development.

What, then, are the tools we need for our peace-building?

In Timor we have a traditional house, raised up on poles, that holds those things most sacred to us. Timor Lorosa'e, the sacred house of peace, which we are challenged to build as a new nation, will also need four poles for its foundation.

The first pole is that we recognise the truth of our history.

As you in Australia are aware, owning your past, your shared history, is indispensable for building reconciliation. Today, the peoples of both our countries are uncovering the historical record of events leading to the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975. Owning what happened leads us both to examine our conscience. But owning the past is not an exercise in apportioning blame. It is an exercise in releasing a truth imprisoned by silence. We allow the truths of the past to speak, and having allowed them their say, we seek better, wiser truths to emerge from future actions. In Timor Lorosa'e we need to own the truth of our past in order to forge a strong, unified and compassionate society. This society will be unafraid to speak, and will be distinguished by its ability to tolerate and respect difference.

The legacy of the failure of our political parties to negotiate, to resist provocation and to overcome manipulation in 1975 is now part of our history. But we must continue to confront this legacy. The memory of violent rivalry has burned itself into our people's minds. In the CNRT Congress held in August, the delegates from the districts and sub-districts conveyed the

message from our people that they are worried about the potential for groups to resurrect and exploit the current situation of popular ignorance of democratic processes, despite their desire for the democratic ideal and developments at a national level.

Some people wrongly interpret the East Timorese process. Today we see emerging numerous experts on and for East Timor who, in reality, fail to understand the Timor situation.

CNRT is viewed as a political party, with some governments giving priority to contacts with the transitional administration, which will cease to exist next year. At the same time, CNRT is ignored. The reality is that CNRT is a platform of political parties and the pillar of national unity – a unity which is vital in these early and difficult years.

In the absence of a policy of solid national unity, the peace-building process is an impossibility. Some political parties consider themselves to have an historic mandate for the simple fact that they were established immediately following the events of 25 April 1974 in Portugal, seemingly forgetting that they too caused the Maubere people great suffering.

These parties attempt to act against the desire for political stability, trying desperately to evoke nostalgia for the political monoliths of the early years, which have left their marks on the minds of our people.

The CNRT is a guarantee of democratic consciousness; CNRT is the guarantee of a political process, which will build a democratic society, committed to a multi-party system.

The second pole is that we realise the values that guided our struggle for freedom.

We struggled for the freedom to create our vision of the new peaceful nation of Timor Lorosa'e. In establishing our new civil society we cannot betray this vision, one held by our freedom-fighters for so long. Too many valiant women and men of FALINTIL died to sink this second pole deep into the ground: that Timor Lorosa'e would be a nation exalted by righteousness.

We seek to build a society that is inclusive and just, prosperous and participatory.

How can Timor Lorosa'e be both inclusive and just? To those who ask this question, I myself ask a question. How is it possible that the guiding principle of the armed fighters of FALINTIL has been to uphold the sanctity of human life? How is it possible that our national liberation army, together with the Church, is taking the lead in opposing the spread of a culture of violence?

Eyewitnesses to the devastation in my country ask another question. They say, how can the East Timorese continue to ignore the preposterous Indonesian monuments that litter Dili and the District Capitals? Why do these monuments remain untouched? Why are they not torn down and destroyed? How can the East Timorese live with these daily reminders of those who caused them so much suffering? And how can the East Timorese people welcome with open arms the visiting President of Indonesia, only months after the destruction of last year?

Ladies and Gentlemen:

A society that is inclusive and just, does not feed on retribution, or repay destruction with destruction. It has its generosity disciplined by truth. For us the truth of the recent past is brutally immediate – we know what happened, it does not have to be explained to us. We know, for example, that the majority of the international election monitors who volunteered to protect our peoples' rights to vote freely in last year's referendum did not come from Australia, or America or Europe. They came from Indonesia. Indonesia is not an object of hatred of the East Timorese. We do not burn their flag and we couldn't care less about their monuments. In Timor Lorosa'e our search for justice is a quest to bring an acceptance of the truth and its consequences. What we offer to those who have done us an injustice is the gift of self-knowledge, a liberating reality that includes us both.

The need for justice is undeniable, however reconciliation is a process, which is vital if a real and forward-looking process of peace-building is to be achieved.

When we speak of justice, we are saying that those responsible for the crimes committed in East Timor must face trial. However, the process is not quite as easy as some would wish.

Our only hope is that that which is taking place with the militias through the measures taken by the Indonesian government, has an outcome which is able to satisfy all those who advocate justice as a priority issue.

Personally, I believe that reconciliation requires greater political flexibility if we are to prevent wounds from continuing to fester for many years to come, without our being capable of healing them in an honest manner.

We seek to build a society that is prosperous and participatory. The true wealth of our new nation will not be its oil or its gas, but its citizens. A country only develops successfully if its citizens are educated and of sound body. Thus, education, health and agriculture represent the most basic services which we are committed to delivering to the entire population, with a democratic form of government sustained by the rule of law.

The third pole is that we honour those who have sacrificed most.

Firstly I wish to pay tribute to the FALINTIL. We best honour those who died by honouring those who still live – the veterans and their families, with a functional role in our new society. Their obvious first role will be to defend our State. Never again will Timor Lorosa'e be the property of another. Many serving members of FALINTIL have already taken up the role of peace-building through peace-keeping, in defence of our sovereign territory. They have participated as scouts in UN PKF border patrols, and in combined actions against militia with Portuguese peace-keepers. They will be the core of our future Defence Force. We will honour them most by safeguarding their political neutrality. We will build peace through making sure that when our people vote for a political party, they are not voting for an army. Our Defence Force will have the people's respect and our people will have their protection.

Not all who have been members of FALINTIL will serve in this new Defence Force. Some of our veterans, through age or injury will find it impossible to serve in the armed forces, take up paid employment or start a business. The State must extend to them, and to the widows and the orphans, the duty of care and the appreciation of our citizens.

For the other able veterans we need programmes for re-training and re-skilling. New industries such as eco-tourism could provide good matches for their qualities of discipline, loyalty and survival skills. I can assure you that any future eco-tourist, trekking through the magnificent misty mountains of Timor Lorosa'e, could wish for no better guide than a former FALINTIL fighter, for whom every bush and blade of grass is an old friend.

In speaking of FALINTIL, I am reminded that if you talk about FALINTIL to people out in our villages you will hear them say 'We are all fighters in the struggle!'

Indeed, it is perfectly true that FALINTIL survived because of the support given to it by successive generations of our population. I must pay tribute also to all CNRT cadres who withstood all manner of ill treatment, from persecution and imprisonment to torture. Without them, the political resistance would not have achieved the impressive degree of organisation, which allowed the people to have faith in their victory and to participate so actively in the popular consultation of 30 August, 1999. For them, too, the state has the obligation to provide assistance for their future. Many people, when one speaks of the needs of CNRT cadres, immediately conjure up thoughts of political appointments and favouritism, forgetting that these were the individuals who gave generously of themselves for 24 long years of struggle, organising and mobilising the population throughout the country.

Another factor to consider is that our population is now extremely young; perhaps forty per cent are under fourteen years old. Many of the youth serving in the clandestine movement did not get the opportunity to go to schools and universities. They now lack the qualifications they need to take up their chosen place in the new nation. They should not remain disadvantaged. For them we must seek to match their sacrifice with access to opportunities to build a new, prosperous and peaceful life.

Throughout this period of preparation for independence, the most pressing needs are those related to socio-economic problems. The people are demanding employment even at a time when we cannot yet offer job opportunities.

There is a need to establish mechanisms for granting more accessible and comprehensive credit. I have established a Fund for the Development of East Timor, and with the money, which CNRT has received from Portuguese citizens, we will set up credit schemes for FALINTIL veterans and CNRT cadres. We also have plans to train small business people as a means of ensuring that these credit schemes are successfully implemented. We have received support from individuals and organisations who are interested in backing this program in order to alleviate social and economic problems. The resolution of these problems is one of the preconditions of the peace-building process.

In raising up the fourth and final pole we need the help of our neighbours, because peace-building is not just a process that happens within societies but also between them. As neighbours, Timor Lorosa'e and Indonesia are both re-building their democracies, and peace-building their societies. The challenge we face together in peace-building is to both mutually respect and mutually aid each other's efforts.

We have hope in the future, although today the demands from all quarters are excessive.

If today we are experiencing difficulties in responding to social demands and the basic needs of our people, we are certain that things will be different in the years to come. Our natural resources are well known. Therefore, provided that we plan well for our future, we are confident that we will not be overly dependent on foreign aid, in particular Australian aid.

It is important that the basis of our relations with Australia does not become ongoing and eternal dependence, which would displease us greatly.

What we aspire to is relations between equals of true cooperation and not those whereby the people of Timor Lorosa'e must beg year after year for aid originating from the Australian taxpayer.

We are a small nation, which continues to live in poverty. However, we are also a people who proved our nobility over 24 years throughout which many countries chose to accept East Timor's integration into Indonesia.

We do not wish to inherit the mistakes made in the course of the years during which the East Timorese people struggled alone. We want to continue to be true to our identity. If people recall, *for 24 years we were able to sustain a resistance on our own, they can imagine how in the future we do not wish to be a political or economic burden on anyone just because we are denied the full benefit of resources which are ours. If not, peace-building is liable to become an exercise in dependency-building, turning Timor Lorosa'e into a protectorate, without the capacity to be viable and to decide freely on its future.*

In addition to reconciliation involving the East Timorese people, peace-building also implies an improvement in relations with the western half of the island which will in turn have a positive impact on relations with Indonesia.

Indonesia continues to face tremendous obstacles to its process of democratisation. Ultra nationalist segments continue to stand in the way of greater advances in the process and this cannot just be ignored.

In order to complement the brokering of a solution to the militia problem, the international community should consider providing extra support to West Timor as a means of promoting improved relations between Timor Lorosa'e and the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur. This would represent a very real contribution to lasting peace-building.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Just as we developed, over the past twenty-five years, the capacity to resist, we are now building our capacity to transform, to govern to create and to live in peace.

Currently CNRT is participating in the East Timor Transitional Administration of the United Nations. We are learning a lot about how Timor Lorosa'e will stand within the international community and how to deal with the international financial institutions. This, too, has been part of our learning process! However, there are fundamental questions that I would like to raise.

One is of the imposition of the English language. Now, it is a fact that East Timorese are very good at languages. Many speak Tetum, Portuguese, Bahasa Indonesia and one or more of the country's eighteen other indigenous languages. However, only a few speak English.

Competency in English now figures highly as a requirement for employment. It has the impact of artificially enhancing the job prospects of those with the ability to speak and write in English, over those unable to communicate well in English but possessing better job skills and qualifications. The lesson we are learning is that wielding the weapon of language to arbitrarily disadvantage or disempower East Timorese will not lead to peace-building.

Another one comes from coping with so many different teachers. East Timorese are trying to learn from people from so many nations and cultures that the lesson itself gets confused. Our friends from all around the world come from many different cultures. They bring us so many different ideas and approaches to civil administration. They are themselves often unaware of their differences in styles of communication and approaches to problem solving. But East Timorese are strongly aware of them. They can find it very difficult to know what is the right way and wrong way to do something when so many different ways are in evidence.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

As we proceed to resolve division and disquiet in our society, as we move to build the independent democratic State of Timor Lorosa'e, we must all unite in our region to resist rearguard actions by those preferring bullets to ballots, and dictatorship to democracy. Our friends in Australia and other member states of the United Nations have a key role in assisting

all of us who are committed to regional peace-building, by aiding the forces of democracy to triumph and allowing freedom to flower among the oppressed.

In working with us to plant this garden of freedom around Timor Lorosa'e, you will help us meet the challenge of peace-building the first new nation of the second millennium.

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão
President of the CNRT/CN

Sydney, 9 November, 2000