DANCING WITH WARRIORS

UNTAC so that Cambodians might as far as possible be free from intimidation and violence as they exercised their electoral choices, was duly held in May 1993. This process saw the election of a new National Assembly and the drafting of a new Cambodian Constitution. Cambodia’s National Assembly sat for the first time on 25 October 1993. With Prince Sihanouk as head of state, Prince Norodom Ranariddh as first prime minister, and Hun Sen as second prime minister, Cambodia was now an independent, sovereign state, neutral and non-aligned.3

The achievement of the 1991 peace settlement was a triumph for the Cambodian people, who despite all they had suffered, and the divisions among them, resolved to reject the past and to proceed with optimism towards a better future. The settlement did not give Cambodia an ideal political system but the new system was a vast improvement on what Cambodia had endured under the Khmer Rouge.

For Australia, the Cambodian peace settlement represented a high point in the history of Australian diplomacy - showing that by making a significant intellectual and political contribution towards the resolution of a major international issue we could make a difference in world affairs. The process of working towards the settlement had also been a convincing demonstration that we could work in close harmony and in productive partnership with Indonesia. The peace settlement was of course also a personal triumph for both Evans and Alatas. Evans was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by US Congressman Stephen Solarz. The Cambodia outcome led to Asian calls for Alatas to be considered for the role of UN Secretary-General, as successor to Javier Pérez de Cuéllar. Alatas would have made an excellent Secretary-General. Alas, it was Africa’s and not Asia’s ‘turn’ to provide a successor to the Latin American Pérez de Cuéllar; the position went to Boutros Boutros-Ghali of Egypt.

15. EAST TIMOR: AUSTRALIA RESPONDS TO THE DILI MASSACRE

When I took up my appointment in Jakarta, East Timor had formally been an Indonesian province for twelve and a half years. Prior to July 1976, it had been a Portuguese colony for over 350 years. Seeking sandalwood and spices, Portuguese adventurers first visited Timor in 1460, and Portugal took possession of the eastern part of the island in the seventeenth century. Under Portuguese rule, East Timor languished as a neglected colonial backwater.

Less than a quarter of the size of Tasmania, East Timor is 640 kilometres north-west of Darwin. Most East Timorese are of mixed Malay and Melanesian descent. A wide variety of languages and dialects are spoken, with Tetum the most common language. East Timor has a savannah climate. In the dry season the coastal plains resemble a desert and in the often short wet season the country appears tropical. The Timorese soil – like that of eastern Indonesia but unlike that on Java – is not rich, and only a minor part is volcanic. A rugged spine of mountains stretching from the west to the east, rising to nearly three thousand metres at its highest point, has long tempered Timorese economic, political and cultural life. The harshness of nature, and the backwardness of Portuguese colonial rule, impoverished the East Timorese peasant for centuries. East Timor’s only significant export during the colonial period was coffee, which was introduced by the Portuguese in the nineteenth century.

The distinguished naturalist and evolutionary theorist Lord Alfred Wallace visited Dili in 1861 and later wrote:

The Portuguese government in Timor is a most miserable one. Nobody seems to care the least about the improvement of the country, and . . . after three hundred years of occupation, there has not been a mile of road made beyond the town . . . All the government officials oppress and rob the natives as much as they can.1

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DANCING WITH WARRIORS

Little had changed by the time Portugal walked out on East Timor in August 1975.

In Portugal in April 1974, the leftist Armed Forces Movement overthrew the regime of Marcello Caetano, the successor to General António de Oliveira Salazar. The new regime ended nearly half a century of authoritarian rule and committed Portugal to a program of decolonization. In July 1975, Portugal signalled its intention to establish a provisional government in East Timor and constitute an elected popular assembly that would determine the eventual status of the territory. However, before these steps could be implemented, and in a region devoid of any credible administration, civil war broke out between East Timor's principal political groups, APODETI (Popular Democratic Association of Timor), UDT (Timorese Democratic Union) and FRETILIN (Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of East Timor). Portugal threw up its hands and abandoned the territory.

Fearing the establishment of a communist state on its eastern flank, and also concerned about the encouragement this tiny state might give to secessionist groups in Maluku province, Indonesia invaded East Timor while the civil war raged, and seized control. Tens of thousands of Timorese and five Australian journalists were killed by Indonesian forces in the course of their military operations. Indonesia set up a so-called Provisional Government of East Timor, which convened a People's Assembly that voted for integration with Indonesia.

Suharto's invasion of East Timor was brutal. It was also unusually sudden. Suharto had been President for almost ten years before he went into East Timor. He had been happy to leave the impoverished territory to Portugal, since East Timor was of no economic or political value to Indonesia. Indonesians assert that Suharto had been reluctant to use military force against East Timor but became alarmed by the behaviour of the leftist Frelimo, and especially by appeals by Frelimo to China and Vietnam for help.

Both sides of Australian politics gave high importance to maintaining working relations with Suharto's Indonesia, and effectively concluded that Australia's interests and those of Indonesia and East Timor were best served by East Timor's being part of Indonesia. The United States took the same position. At the time of the invasion, Australia was in no position to take any constructive initiatives. The Whitlam government had been dismissed, there was a caretaker government in Canberra, under caretaker Prime Minister Fraser, and no initiatives could be taken until after the elections, to be held on 13 December 1975. Australian military intervention was put out of the question and besides, as this was just after the end of the Vietnam War, such action would not have been favoured by the electorate. On the day of the invasion of East Timor, the caretaker Foreign Minister, Andrew Peacock, said that the Australian government regretted the course that events in East Timor had taken.

On 17 July 1976, President Suharto formalized the integration of East Timor with Indonesia. The United Nations did not recognize the integration, and the UN Security Council called upon all states to respect the right of the East Timorese people to self-determination. Subsequently the Australian government urged that the Security Council take practical measures to enable the people of East Timor to exercise this right. In January 1978, however, Foreign Minister Peacock announced that the Fraser government had decided to accept East Timor as part of Indonesia, for the reason that Indonesian control was effective and covered all major administrative centres.

In December 1978, Peacock announced that Australia would give de jure recognition to the Indonesian takeover, in commencing negotiations with Jakarta early the following year over the delineation of the seabed boundary between East Timor and Australia (see Chapter 13). The government's policy attracted strong domestic criticism, including — but not only — from those who believed that Australia had a special debt to the East Timorese, arising from their assistance to Australian forces when Japan occupied Timor during World War II. Apart from Australia, thirty-one other states, including Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Norway, Pakistan and Sweden, came to recognize Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor, either expressly or by implication. A greater number of states declined to recognize Indonesian sovereignty. After its election in 1983, the Hawke government took the same position as had been taken by the Fraser government. This then was the situation at the time I became Ambassador to Indonesia.
Indonesian rule brought many benefits to East Timor – more widespread education, greatly improved access to electricity, hospitals and medical health centres; and a vast increase in the number of roads – and East Timor was the recipient of the highest per capita allocation of development funds from Jakarta to any Indonesian province.

But the administration in East Timor, which was heavy-handed and dominated by the military, failed to win the hearts and minds of the East Timorese people. Indonesia had expected that its numerically superior military forces would eliminate Fretilin elements within a fairly short time frame. This was not to be the case. Fretilin enjoyed solid support, and attempts to deny it access to basic necessities resulted in devastating consequences for the local population. They suffered destruction of crops and property, and in the early years suffered large-scale loss of life because of famine, and the response of the Indonesian military. And those East Timorese who did not cooperate with Indonesian rule were brutalized.

Meanwhile, the rapid expansion of education for the East Timorese, at a time when there were few opportunities for employment, saw the emergence of a pool of disaffected young people. When Indonesia invaded the province, barely five per cent of the population were literate, in either Portuguese or Tetum. Indonesia introduced Bahasa Indonesia as the national language in East Timor and provided many new schools. As a result, literacy levels increased dramatically. But the lack of jobs for young people led to acute frustration. In a society where men are required to produce a dowry in the form of a herd of cattle, a young man without any source of income had a slender prospect of marriage.

Employment opportunities were not only limited for young people. East Timorese were excluded from senior positions in the public sector in the province, and the removal in 1989 of restrictions on access to and from East Timor led to an influx of people from Java and Sulawesi, who displaced Timorese from many roles in the private sector, including small-scale trading. At the same time, East Timor’s coffee industry – long the principal driving force in the local economy, and a major source of employment for local people – was now controlled by the Indonesian military.

Indonesia had long opposed Australian aid to East Timor, but in the new climate of cooperation, and with the support of Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, I was able to secure the approval of other key Indonesian ministers, and the military, to initiate an Australian aid program in the province. One of our most valuable, visible and sustainable projects involved providing clean water and sanitation for Dili and nearby urban and rural areas.

Some of the problems facing Indonesia in its administration of East Timor were cultural. East Timorese culture was totally different from the cultures of Indonesia’s other provinces; but whereas the Indonesian war of independence against the Dutch had bound together Indonesians from every ethnic and cultural group, in the common cause of ridding their country of its colonial rulers, the East Timorese had not shared this experience.

Moreover, under Portuguese rule, East Timor had operated as a large collection of autonomous chiefdoms. Indonesia sought to impose on the province a unified system of administration, but ran up against traditional power structures at the local level, particularly in rural areas, where there was a strong hierarchy of landowning families and established ritual for the appointment of village chiefs, invariably elderly men. The Indonesian objectives were sensible but because Indonesia failed to understand Timorese customs, and hence failed to pay respect to traditional Timorese elders, these efforts were not successful.

In the course of six visits to ‘Timtim’, as Indonesians called East Timor, I got to know well many members of the Catholic Church, including Bishop Carlos Belo, Father Domingos da Cunha from the church of San Antonio in the Manufahi district of Dili; the scholarly German Jesuit Father Albino Karim, who was head of the local Jesuit seminary; and another Jesuit, Father Marcus Waneandi, who ran a high school. Father Karim thirsted for books about Indonesia and when I visited him at the Jesuit seminary in Dili I always took him some. Father Karim would be murdered by the Indonesian military in 1999.

Two special friends Carole and I made were sisters of the Salesian order, Sister Paula Battaglila, who had left Italy in 1988 to work
as a missionary, had established an orphanage at Ventiiale in central East Timor, with a health clinic nearby to serve poor families. She and her subordinate Sister Marlene sought my assistance in setting up a high school for girls at Ventiiale. I raised funds from church contacts, and from Australia's aid agency, to help Paula establish the St Maria Mazzarello Professional School for Girls. It was a special honour for Carole and me to stay overnight at Ventiiale Convent and hear the nuns and novices singing, enjoy Sister Paula's coffee – for which she was renowned – and savour freshly fried slices of breadfruit and sweet, finger-thin bananas. Just across from Ventiiale, at Fatumaka, was an older Salesian initiative, the Don Bosco Technical School. Built in 1980, the school offered courses in carpentry and in electrical and mechanical studies. A driving force behind the school was Father Eligio Locatelli, who had come to East Timor in 1964. Locatelli, a much-loved man, had helped give hundreds of East Timorese boys skills for useful jobs. I met with him on several occasions, always equipped with a bottle of whisky, as I knew that he enjoyed it but could not secure it locally.

I mention the Catholic Church because from my first visit to Timor I was enormously impressed by the role Catholic priests and nuns were playing in helping the East Timorese. Catholic religious were also one of the main objective sources of advice about what was happening at the grassroots level in the province. The local East Timorese priests were not saints. Some had wives, some had mistresses, and several had fathered children, but all were committed to helping their people.

The church had not been especially strong in East Timor in the period of Portuguese rule but became very influential in the course of Indonesian rule. The East Timorese felt that they could talk openly to priests and nuns. Just as Indonesia had alienated traditional elders, it also alienated the church, by failing to heed sensible advice from nuns and priests and by curtailting privileges enjoyed by the clergy and generally making life difficult for them. When Father Locatelli wanted to visit his ailing mother in Italy, he was told that if he left he would not be readmitted to East Timor. When he was physically threatened by ABRI, I intervened with Defence Minister Morendani, to ensure Locatelli's protection.

In the years since the invasion of East Timor, the province's Governor, Mario Carrascallo, had become increasingly disenchanted with Indonesian rule and dismayed by his inability to change the policies of the Indonesian military. Carrascallo, who was part Timorese, part Portuguese, had originally trained for the church. His wife, Melena, whom Carole and I came to know well, spent most of her days in the villages, dispensing food, medicines, clothing and kindness to the poor. Appointed by Jakarta, Carrascallo was in a delicate position but through his commitment to help the East Timorese people, together with his integrity and high intelligence, he retained widespread affection. His position, however, came under threat because of his known antipathy to ABRI objectives.

In my first year in Jakarta, Foreign Minister Alatas agreed to my proposal that Australia be authorized to give direct, government-to-government assistance to East Timor. Hitherto such direct bilateral assistance had not been permitted by Indonesia, and Australian assistance had been channelled through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), with help also being given to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to assist with its humanitarian activities in the province. Australia's first direct aid project assisted farmers by providing them with improved technology to reduce diseases in cattle and improve crop yields. AIDAB moved quickly to come up with further ambitious projects, including a water supply and sanitation project, a project for the construction of several bridges, and technical training.

Indonesia was very sensitive about Australian views on East Timor but also very interested in them. After my early visits to the province, I put to Alatas my private views as to steps that would be helpful in improving the situation in East Timor, where tensions continued to simmer. These were:

SHORT TERM

• Relaxation of military pressure on the population
• Maintenance of open communications and an open province
• Reduction in pressure on the Catholic Church
• Automatic renewal of visas for foreign-born priests
DANCING WITH WARRIORS

• Decision not to proceed with a change in the land tenure system from freehold to leasehold
• Extension of Governor Carzacca’s term

MEDIUM TERM

• Reduction and eventual removal of all combat troops and a reduction in the number of territorial troops
• Greater emphasis on human resources development
• Recognition of the special place of the Church
• A more genuine indigenous provincial administration
• Less ABRI involvement in the economy
• Stronger recognition of East Timor’s distinctive history and cultural identity in education programs
• A package drawn from the above to give East Timor special status [as had been done for the province of Aceh]

Up until November 1991, there was still a possibility that Indonesia could turn around the situation in East Timor. The most dangerous factor was the disaffection of young people. The disaffection of the young, indeed of all East Timorese, stemmed from far more than concerns about employment and the military’s economic domination of the province. Fundamental to the pervasive antipathy to Indonesian rule was the oppressive role of the Indonesian military, widespread violations of human rights, and the administration’s lack of understanding of East Timorese culture.

There was just a chance that the military’s policy would change. By early 1991, the new head of the East Timor Operational Command, Brigadier General Rudy Warouw, and his superior, Major General Sintong Panjaitan (who was based in Bali as Commander of Military Region IX, which encompassed East Timor), were becoming aware that change was needed. Warouw had gained the respect of Governor Carzacca, who regarded him as a huge improvement on his predecessor. The situation in East Timor was, however, about to enter a new and tragic phase.

On 12 November 1991, in the late afternoon, I had just returned from a visit to Sulawesi and was driving in heavy traffic from Jakarta Airport when my deputy, Tony Healy, called on the car phone to tell me the grim news that there had been a massacre in Dili, at the city’s Santa Cruz Cemetery. I immediately arranged for an experienced officer, David Binns, First Secretary of the Embassy, to leave for Dili on the first flight in the morning, to get a direct account of events. I spoke promptly to Defence Minister Moerdani. He was Acting Foreign Minister in the absence of Ali Sastro, who was overseas. Moerdani gave me his version of events, which was that Indonesia soldiers in Dili had reacted to an attack on one of their forces during a procession associated with a memorial service for Sebastiao Gomes (Gomes was a student who had been killed by Indonesian troops). Until a senior officer returned from Dili, Moerdani said, he would not have the full facts. He said that he understood that twenty to twenty-one people had died but the number might rise, because of pressure on the resources of the Dili hospital.

I followed up immediately, setting out in writing the Australian government’s deep concerns. Moerdani arranged for a police guard on the Embassy. He knew instinctively that the Australian government would be making a strong protest, and so there was a risk of serious demonstrations, possibly violence, outside the Embassy. I knew that Moerdani would be more than likely orchestrating demonstrations himself, but also that he would want to manage them so that they did not get out of control. In the event, demonstrations did take place outside the Embassy, but they were well controlled.

On 14 November, ABRI formally told the media that the casualty toll of the Dili incident was 19 dead and 91 wounded. (The figure of 19 was extraordinary, since the previous day the Commander-in-Chief of the Indonesian Armed Forces, General Tmp Sutrisno, had said publicly that the number killed might be more than 50.) On the same day, I was advised by Binns, by telephone from Dili, that he had convincing information that the number of deaths was far greater than 19 and that ABRI was seeking to cover up a significant massacre. I conveyed what Binns had told me to Foreign Minister Evans and decided to visit East Timor as soon as possible after making strong representations in Jakarta.

On 17 November, President Suharto announced that he was setting up a National Commission of Inquiry into what had happened in Dili, to be led by Judge Djualani, assisted by six members. This was a dramatic response to the strong statements
by Prime Minister Bob Hawke (he had called for a ‘dinkum inquiry’) and other governments, and protests by the international community.

In advance of travel outside Jakarta, I was, as a matter of course, required to submit prior notification to the Indonesian Foreign Ministry, which reserved the right to refuse ambassadorial travel. Shortly after I submitted my application to visit East Timor, Moerdani telephoned, advising me not to go. He said: ‘You may be shot at, or caught in crossfire between ABRI forces and dissident elements’. He was also concerned about the political implications of my visiting Dili. ‘I may not be able to stop Coordinating Minister Sudomo making a statement that you are meddling,’ he said.

I told Moerdani that the reports I had received I had to visit East Timor and that I expected him to take every measure to ensure I could move around safely. ‘I count on ABRI to give me the usual security protection,’ I said. Moerdani replied that this was assured; he did not want any incidents. He could not, however, guarantee control of dissidents.

I then telephoned Governor Carrascaló and told him of my intention to visit. He was pleased and said that he wanted me to stay at his residence while I was in Dili, and not at the Hotel Turismo as I usually did. I told him that Carole was keen to come too, and he said that he and his wife, Melena, would be delighted to welcome us both. He also told me that he had to receive the Djaelant Commission first, and that the earliest date convenient for me to visit was 3 December.

In the meantime I told Alatas (who had returned to Jakarta on 14 November), Moerdani, Coordinating Minister Sudomo, Minister for Home Affairs Rudini, and indeed as many ministers as I could, that the ABRI account of what had occurred in Dili was a fabrication and that the international community would never accept it. I also spoke to the Speaker of the Indonesian Parliament, Khair Pusudi. President Suharto had declined my request for a meeting before he departed Indonesia on 18 November, with Alatas, for a meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, and I had to convey my views to him through Clive Williams and through Suharto’s son-in-law, Lieutenant Colonel Prabowo Subianto.

On 26 November, knowing that on the following day General Sutrisno would be making a formal presentation to the Indonesian

EAST TIMOR

Parliament, I urged Moerdani to instruct Sutrisno to tell the truth about the Dili massacre. Sutrisno, however, repeated ABRI’s false account.

Throughout this period, I had excellent public support from our government. On 27 November, Prime Minister Hawke told the House of Representatives: ‘Ambassador Philip Flood has been doing an outstanding job for us in Jakarta on this issue.’

I left Jakarta at 5.00 am on 3 December for East Timor, accompanied by Carole and two Embassy staff. We were met at Dili’s Comoro Airport by Governor Carrascaló and, after I had spoken to the press, were taken to the Governor’s peaceful, spacious, white-walled, white-tiled residence, which was adorned with flowers. Carrascaló gave me his frank assessment of what had happened on 12 November. He had not witnessed the massacre but was on the scene very quickly afterwards and had spoken to eyewitnesses. He estimated the total killed to be in excess of one hundred.

I next visited the Santa Cruz Cemetery and walked the dusty paths where the atrocities had been committed. I then called on the ICRC and on Bishop Belo, to get their assessments. Bishop Belo, like Governor Carrascaló, put the number of the East Timorese dead at over one hundred. I also talked with Father Karin, who had witnessed the massacre.

I called on Brigadier General Warouw as well. The badly shaken Warouw, one of the more decent Indonesian officers in East Timor, lamely presented the official line. He was appalled by what had happened and he lamented that his military career was probably finished.

I made a quick trip to Vila Madi, where the Salesian sisters welcomed me warmly. The convent, surrounded by flamboyant trees blazing orange and red, and with its pathways lined with red lilies, was a haven of peace. The sisters had invited various priests, including Father Locastelli, to join us. None of the local priests and sisters had witnessed the massacre but, like the Governor, all had talked with young people who had survived the atrocities. Though there were differences about the precise number killed at the Santa Cruz Cemetery, everyone told a similar story. The broad facts were clear.

When Portugal cancelled a planned visit of a parliamentary delegation to East Timor, there was tension between pro-
independence and pro-integration youths. On 28 October the tensions had erupted into a clash in which two young people died, one of them Sébastião Gomes, a pro-independence supporter. A commemorative mass for Gomes took place on 12 November at the church of San Antonio at Mosteiros. After the service the congregation headed off in a procession to the Santa Cruz Cemetery, a distance of about three kilometres. Some of the mourners waved flags and banners in support of independence. Scuffles broke out with Indonesian soldiers along the way, and in the vicinity of the Governor’s office two soldiers were stabbed. Shortly after most of the mourners had reached the cemetery gates, a large group of Indonesian troops and police arrived on the scene and immediately opened fire on the crowd. Many mourners were able to flee but troops then surrounded the cemetery and trapped those remaining inside. Many were shot in the sporadic gunfire that followed, while others were stabbed and beaten. Hundreds were arrested and many more sought refuge in Bishop Belo’s house and in the office of the ICRC.

There were also various reports of the military killing people in the back of trucks after collecting them from the cemetery and elsewhere, and of troops killing the wounded that had been taken to hospital.

Estimates of the death toll varied, but most put the figure at more than a hundred. Some put the figure at higher than two hundred. Whatever figure proved the more accurate, the atrocity of the events of 12 November was undisputed, and an appalling indictment of the reaction of the Indonesian military, including some Timorese-origin units, to the wounding of two soldiers.

On my departure from Dili, on 7 December, I told a crowded press conference that both Governor Carrascalão and Bishop Belo had told me they believed the number of people to have died in the massacre, at the Santa Cruz Cemetery or subsequently, was over one hundred. I also said that I had seen no evidence that the massacre reflected any deliberate or calculated decision or action on the part of the Indonesian government.

Back in Jakarta, I gave Evans a full cabled report on my meetings and investigation. I learned later that some in the Indonesian government wanted me sent home immediately – declared persona non grata – for daring to refuse publicly the military’s lies about the massacre.

Evans resolved to visit Jakarta and press Suharto to tell the world the truth about the Dili massacre. In the meantime I was to report the facts of the massacre to every senior Indonesian I could. I informed Suharto, through his family, that Australia had incontrovertible evidence that the military’s story was false. I said the same to leading government ministers and to senior figures in the Indonesian military, including General Sutriyono, whom I called on 10 December; he refused to move from his hardline stance. I sought to see Judge Djieslan, but he declined to see me. Two government ministers – Soepardjo Roestam, Minister for People’s Welfare, and Hartarto, Minister for Industry – quizzed me privately about the situation in Dili. Roestam told me that he felt frustrated and powerless in the face of the events unfolding in East Timor, but he nonetheless wanted to learn more about what was happening and to know what he felt were the facts on the ground. Hartarto likewise knew that ABRI’s official line was not the full story and he too sought my perspective.

Evans came to Jakarta on 19 December, for a two-day official visit. Alatas was very happy to see him, and the two Foreign Ministers spent seven hours in meetings and further time together at a social function. Given the extraordinary demands on his time, the amount of time he spent in discussions with Evans was a measure of the high respect Alatas had for him. Evans was very forthright with Alatas, telling him that enormous damage would be done to Indonesia if the Indonesian government, or the Djieslan Commission, sought to confirm in any way the false account of the events at Dili that was being disseminated by ABRI.

Suharto had declined my requests that he meet with Evans, and Evans sought the intervention of Alatas to secure an appointment with the President. All efforts to obtain an appointment were to no avail, however, and Evans had to accept as a last resort a meeting with Secretary of State Moerdinno, to whom he communicated the views he would have otherwise put directly to Suharto.

There can be no doubt that Evans’s forceful statements and representations, and my work on his behalf, had a major if not very welcome impact on Indonesia.
DANCING WITH WARRIORS

The Djaelani Commission issued its preliminary report on 26 December 1991. This report did not tell the full truth about the Dili massacre but it did come much closer to the truth than had the statements made by the Indonesian military. It had the courage to criticise ABRI, to disavow completely the ABRI estimate of the number of casualties, and to call for action against all, including military officers, who were suspected of having violated the law. This was an enormous step forward. Nevertheless, the report raised difficulties, particularly in its description of the military's actions as self-defence:

[A] spontaneous reaction took place among the security personnel to defend themselves, without command, resulting in the excessive shooting at the demonstrators, causing deaths and wounded. At the same time, another group of unorganised security personnel, acting outside any control or command, also fired shots and committed beating, causing more casualties.

Although the casualty toll until now was set at 29 dead and 93 wounded, the Commission feels that there are sufficiently strong grounds to conclude that the death casualties totalled about 50 while the wounded exceeded 91.1

The weight of the evidence that the Commission had assembled supported its view that the tragic events in Dili were not the result of a deliberate act carried out under an order issued by the Indonesian armed forces, whether from Jakarta or on the initiative of the local command; nor were the actions of the military found to have been ordered by the Indonesian government, or to reflect government policy.

In essence, Australia shared this view, believing that the appalling atrocities perpetrated on 12 November had been instigated by junior military hotheads, acting spontaneously and on their own initiative.

Immediately the Djaelani Commission's report was issued, I telephoned Evans at his home – it was Boxing Day – to give him the details. He was delighted that the Australian government's representations and those of others had clearly had an impact.

Two days after receiving the report, President Suharto ordered in response a wide range of civil and military measures, including the replacement of Major General Panjaitan, Brigadier General Warouw and other officers down the local command echelons in East Timor. Suharto also ordered Indonesia's Attorney-General to initiate legal action against all suspected of having violated the law. It was a bold political decision by Suharto to counteract a strong public rebuke for ABRI.

Evans concluded, correctly, that the Indonesian government's initial reaction was positive and helpful, that Judge Djaelani's report was very encouraging, and that substantial and far-reaching measures to address the Santa Cruz massacre had been set in train.

An official Australian report on the situation in East Timor some years later commented on the massacre:

The shock and anger caused by the tragedy fuelled the resentment felt by ordinary East Timorese towards the security forces and the failures of Indonesian rule. It extinguished the hopes of many that some good could come from Indonesia's administration. It marked the end of a relatively short tolerant period in East Timor and the loss of influence of those who had championed the more liberal regime.²

Before completing my term as Ambassador I made two further visits to East Timor.³ On both occasions it was very clear to me that the massacre had dealt a severe blow to Jakarta's efforts to integrate East Timor successfully into Indonesia.

The international outrage that followed the Dili massacre turned the tide of opinion against Indonesia. Alatas wrote subsequently that the events of 12 November 1991 'constituted a watershed in Indonesian diplomacy on East Timor and since that date, international support for Indonesia's position inexorably declined while that for the independence movement in East Timor markedly increased'.³