

The Australian Council

For Overseas Aid



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12 March 1982

The Editor-in-Chief,
Sydney Morning Herald
GPO Box 506
SYDNEY N.S.W. 2001

Dear Sir,

The Executive Committee of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid met on 11 March 1982 and resolved to request a retraction by the Sydney Morning Herald of the attacks made on the integrity of Mgr Martinho da Costa Lopes, the Apostolic Administrator in East Timor.

The criticisms appeared in an article by Mr P. Hastings in the Sydney Morning Herald on 8 March 1982. The criticisms of the Bishop are made on the basis of quotes wrongly attributed to the Bishop. At no time has Mgr Lopes forecast "widespread famine in June". What the Bishop said and what Australian Catholic Relief reported him as saying was, "if outside food aid is not received there is a danger of expected famine".

Australian Catholic Relief acknowledge in the widely reported press conference of 11 January 1982 that the Bishop's use of English could be misinterpreted. Mr Hastings himself acknowledged in an article in the Sydney Morning Herald of 6 March 1982 that "there are certainly pockets of population short of food".

In view of the misquoting of the Bishop the Executive believe the reflection on his integrity was unfair and so I request a retraction.

Yours faithfully,

R.K.R. Alston
Chairman