

Seeing red in a freedom offer

By Anthony Goldstone

Dili: With the remnants of Lisbon's former empire up for grabs, it is now the turn of Portuguese Timor's 600,000 people to step on to the diplomatic stage. Whatever the outcome, there has already been a rich mixture of political haggling, a protest of conditions by soldiers and a full serving of "reds under the bed" stories.

Portugal's Overseas Territories Minister, Dr Antonio Costa de Almeida Santos, has assured the people that they will be free to decide their own future. But as he arrived in the capital to make this promise, the most visible problem was in the shape of 300 Portuguese soldiers demonstrating for more pay and repatriation. The three infant political parties managed to get a foot on the stage with a rally organised by the handful of enthusiasts who have suddenly found a new world in politics.

But the focal point is to be found outside Portuguese Timor. Judging from Jakarta reports filtering through to Dili, there has been no shift by the Indonesians in their determination to incorporate the province into their country.

Suggestions being made in Portuguese Timor's press are, however, holding a full measure of attention, even if many of the stories are nothing short of outrageous.

It is now being suggested that the independence movement in Portuguese Timor, which recently took the name of Fretilente, is tainted by Maoism. The *Sinar Harapan* was told by a "reliable source" in the capital that the recent demonstration against integration with Indonesia was funded by "left-wing Chinese."

The demonstration, which culminated in the presentation of a petition to the Indonesian Consul in Dili, has been taken as an affront to Jakarta. The passages which have been quoted, however, suggest that the petition was fairly mild, merely asking the Indonesians to respect the right of the people of Portuguese Timor to tread the path to independence already trodden by the "elder brothers," the Indonesians.

The military publication, *Bertia Yudha*, was much more explicit than *Sinar Harapan* and produced a bevy of charges alleging Chinese and Maoist involvement in Portuguese Timor's affairs.

Reports claimed that Maoist literature was on sale in Dili; Fretilente was hanging communist posters in its headquarters; Chinese residents of Dili were keeping pictures of Mao Tse-tung in their homes; and the Maoist Movimento

Reorganisations Prolatariado Portugues (MRPP) had sent six cadres from Lisbon to Timor. One of the cadres was quoted as saying: "We must unite to face the fascist Suharto Government."

Bertia Yudha did not stop there: a Chinese officer in the Portuguese Army was said to be training Chinese civilians; ships had been spotted unloading arms; four Chinese generals had landed in Portuguese Timor, travelling there via Canberra.

Such reports have met with an obvious response from the diplomatic community. One diplomat did note, however, that even if the Chinese had an interest in the future of Portuguese Timor, now is anything but the right time for them to expose their hand. The Soviets see the situation in a different light, inclining to the view that the Chinese are supporting the party which seeks to maintain ties with Portugal.

PAKISTAN

Bhutto's opposition melting away

By Salamat Ali

Islamabad: Whatever the reading of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's sweeping Cabinet changes, one fact is certain: The Pakistani Premier was secure in the knowledge, when waving the political stick, that the Opposition could offer only token criticism. For the groups who sit on the other side of the fence are beset by party problems.

Bhutto's major reshuffle, which included the shock departure of Dr Mubashir Hasan, the Minister for Finance, Planning and Development and considered a star in the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) cast, also came at a time when there was increasing suspicion within the ruling group about the real intentions of the Opposition, the conglomerate United Democratic Front (UDF). But the mood of the PPP was hardly of interest to UDF leaders; their main worry, coming on top of other frustrations, was a month in which trusted figures packed their party bags and joined Bhutto.

A peculiarity in the political panorama has, in fact, been the Opposition's inability to take advantage of PPP problems and the ruling group's waning popularity since the predictable failure to make good election promises. Bhutto has managed to trump the opposition's few efforts to challenge him, even though there has been plentiful ammunition in the political store: language agitation, labour unrest and police strikes in 1972, the abortive Civil Disobedience Movement in 1973 and this year's anti-Ahmadis' riots.

The Ahmadis' issue was certainly a