

Letter from a WSWWS reader

1 October 1999

Dear WSWWS,

Thank you for the great articles and in particular your excellent coverage of the Kosovo situation. I had hoped for a similar coverage of East Timor but I have felt a bit disappointed with the articles so far. You seem to have taken a similar stance on both conflicts when I don't quite think the two deserve to be viewed in the same way.

I believe that there are significant differences between what is occurring in East Timor and what happened in Kosovo. Unlike the Kosovo crisis, this intervention has UN approval, it does not involve attacking civilian (or indeed any military) targets, and it does not violate any nation's sovereignty (the forces are essentially there at the East Timorese bequest, and East Timor is not part of Indonesia). Most importantly, the forces going into East Timor are quite obviously there to keep the peace, those which bombed Kosovo were set on war.

And how else could the violent attacks on the East Timorese be halted except by sending in armed forces? Further diplomacy might have been effective but it seems unlikely that it would have been able to provide a fast enough response. Certainly it does seem that grave errors of judgment have been made regarding the likely outcome of the vote for independence, and little attention was given to safeguarding the population against the possibilities of violent retribution. Moreover, now that the situation demands attention there is a touch of jingoism in the air and a degree of political posturing. But I still don't see what else could have been done to safeguard the people living in East Timor?

Thanks,
NR



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