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December 7, 1991

Ambassador Ingrid Hall  
Canadian Embassy  
Jakarta, Indonesia

Dear Ambassador Hall:

As follow-up to the breakfast meeting at your residence on Friday, December 6, 1991, I feel it is necessary to provide a few comments on Canada's position concerning East Timor.

First let us have no misunderstanding about the value of human rights. We all believe in its importance. There is no question that what occurred in East Timor was wrong regardless of the circumstances that led to the army taking the action that it did.

What this letter is about is how Canada reacts to the situation. It does not matter how I feel personally about the shootings. What matters is that Canada's response is appropriate.

I have a deep concern that Canada's response will not be pragmatic, but rather political or emotional. We as a nation cannot allow this to happen. We must look at all the consequences of the action we take.

If Canada chooses to be one of the first countries to cut off aid to Indonesia, then we have taken a step that will undo years of work by CIDA, the Commercial section of our Embassy, and many others in both the public and private sector. Future Government relationships and business transactions will be difficult. We will set back Canada's position in Indonesia, and I happen to believe in all of ASEAN, for many years.

Countries like Japan, France, Italy, U.S.A., U.K., Germany, and others are all waiting for the Indonesian investigation to be completed before they respond. I fail to see any purpose in Canada taking any serious action against Indonesia until the investigation is over and Indonesia announces the findings. We are placing ourselves in an extremely difficult political and economic disadvantage with Indonesia compared to most other countries in the world. Why? One of the reasons the Gulf War did not become a more major conflict between many nations is the fact that the U.S.A. got the United Nations to be the driving force in condemning Iraq's aggression. If Canada feels action should be taken, then let us use the United Nations as the enforcer.

Although we are at this moment only talking about Canada's aid program, I'm sure it is obvious to those who know how business is conducted in Indonesia that the issue is much bigger than the aid funds. The position we take will have very serious economic consequences on Canadian companies doing business in Indonesia as well as those Indonesians directly receiving our aid.

Yours truly,

*Curtis E. Whyte*  
Curtis E. Whyte