# Richard Tanter, 'Revisiting the Scott-Tanter secret 1978 assessments on the state of the East Timor campaign in Australia and on the question of FRETILIN negotiations’.

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Abstract

In March 1978, David Scott, the founder of the Australia-East Timor Association, travelled from Melbourne to Maputo for discussions with the external representatives of Fretilin. He took with him two type-written documents: one titled *The East Timor Campaign in Australia* and the other *Independence in East Timor – a new view from Australia*. Both were prepared by David and myself (then the chair of AETA) at the request of Jose Ramos Horta, resulting from his concerns about the evident ineffectiveness of support groups for East Timorese self-determination in Australia, and debates within both the Fretilin external group and the support movements about future strategy for East Timor at a particularly dark time.

At Horta’s request and our understanding these papers were to be kept entirely confidential. The *Campaign* paper was an honest but in places sharp critical assessment from our view point of the main actors and influences on the prospects of successful campaigning in Australia. No doubt many would have at the time and will now consider some of the assessments slanderous.

The *Independence* paper was an exploration by two Australians about the conditions under which DRET could – and could not – consider negotiations with the Indonesian invaders. By the end of 1978 those sensitive and difficult considerations, initiated by Horta, were to lead to the unsuccessful attempt by other members of the External Leadership in Maputo to try Horta and Alkatiri for treason, with a view to their execution.

The conference paper will introduce the two papers, set them in their contexts of the Timor campaign in Australia of early 1978 and the information available in Australia at that time about both the political and military situations in Timor Leste and developments in Indonesia. The paper will conclude by considering the views and thinking in the two papers looked at almost half a century later, in particular examining questions about the place and roles of non-Timorese in the support movement.

Documents discussed will be available at <https://nautilus.org/associates/richard-tanter/materials-for-tanter-presentation-to-international-workshop-solidarity-with-timor-leste-struggle-for-self-determination-actors-institutions-contexts/>.