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Exclusive Rogerio Lobato interview:
EAST TIMOR FIGHTS ON

ALSO: Our polluted oceans
Emergency: power laws

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IN THIS ISSUE .....  

We print an exclusive interview with Rogerio Lobato, Minister for National Defence in the government of the Democratic Republic of East Timor. Sent out of East Timor by his government three days before Indonesia's full-scale invasion in December 1975, he nevertheless remains commander of the armed forces and is in constant contact with the liberated areas in East Timor.

The interview gives a remarkable account of the current state of the liberation war and of the methods by which the armed forces and people of East Timor fight the Indonesian invaders.

The first part of an article on Ocean Pollution by seaman Russell Priest discusses the nature and function of the oceans.

Mick Tubbs, one-time ironworker and political organiser, currently a law student at Macquarie University in Sydney, discusses the class nature of state emergency powers.

A film review and our regular items Comment and Economic Notes complete this issue.

ALR PUBLICATION

Despite problems (mentioned in the December 1976 Double Issue), we will attempt to bring ALR out monthly, March to December (i.e. nine or ten issues for the year). Assuming we are successful in this, publication dates will be the first week of each month.

A NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS

ALR is only too happy to receive contributions on any subject of interest to the left and the labor movement. We prefer the length to be less than 5,000 words, but exceptions are made in special cases. We prefer articles on whatever subject to be accessible to all interested readers prepared to make an effort, and therefore request that unnecessary jargon or 'academese' be avoided. For time and space considerations we reserve the right to cut articles where this does not affect the basic sense of the discussion. Occasionally we propose style or sub-editing changes but only in consultation with the author(s). We ask those authors who do not hear from us about publication of their articles in a reasonable time to recognise that this is purely due to pressure of other work on our small collective. Usually we have not forgotten you.
Moving into its second year of office the Fraser government is in serious trouble. Its economic policy stands in tatters before the realities of continued inflation and ever-higher levels of unemployment. Many who voted for Fraser in December '75 solely because they thought he would solve the economic problems - which the media said had been caused by Labor's blunders - are beginning to see that Fraser has no answers either. Meanwhile the crisis of ruling class policy is producing huge cracks in the conservative coalition. The blistering attack on Fraser by Queensland leader Knox, stems from an opportunist desire to dissociate the Queensland government from Fraser in preparation for state elections this year. But it also reflects real divisions and loss of confidence among conservative forces who represent the interests of capital.

Yet amidst the crisis of policy, the confusion and loss of confidence, these forces are pushing ahead with plans for a confrontation with the unions. They aim to shackle them by means of the provisions of the Industrial Relations Bill. At the same time the hunt continues for a policy which will work and an ideology which will sell and justify that policy to the people. The government, business and media maintain their campaign on the key themes of wage restraint, hard work, higher productivity, increased profitability, cuts in public spending, less 'big government' and so on.

Last December The Australian ran a series of five editorials on the theme: 'Australia: the Way Ahead'. Vague and meandering they came up with little that was concrete. Mostly they proposed 'solutions' such as optional retirement at 60 instead of 65 to reduce unemployment. But two strong points emerged. One was a polemic against high taxes, big government and public spending. This was quite shamelessly linked with the proposal, pushed strongly by industry employers, for tax cuts so that people could spend their money in purchasing the goods produced by the private sector rather than having it spent for them on things like education.

The second point is the recognition of the increasingly important role of primary products and raw materials in the Australian economy. The first editorial in the series pointed out that:

"Today some 12 per cent of the people produce 80 per cent of the exports and they are out there in the outback, digging minerals or growing wheat, wool or beef etc."

This theme was taken up a month later in The Australian editorial for New Year's Day:

We have the difficulty presented by a
manufacturing sector which has to be revived, if economic prosperity is to be restored, yet which presently finds itself unable to sell satisfactorily even to the domestic market.

Yet, on the other hand, we have a minerals-extractive sector whose assured performance is increasingly valued by the manufacturing economies of Japan and the United States. We have a rural sector which in the last half of 1976 has been so revived as to threaten to overtake minerals as the country’s major export earner, for the first time since the late 1960s.

And we have yet to come, the huge bonanza of uranium exports.

There is an increasing attraction for this fact of life to be enshrined as a policy by the leading group within the Fraser government.

While manufacturing interests are still pushing hard for their interests, and Fraser himself is probably not fully decided on his course, all the signs are that manufacturing industry will be let sink or swim on its own and that the main policy is towards turning Australia into a huge rural and mineral products ‘farm’.

Whatever else it might or might not do, such a policy would greatly distort Australia’s economy, produce huge unemployment and many social problems. It would make us dependent on the major capitalist powers, especially Japan and the USA, and make independence a myth. It would not and cannot solve Australia’s economic problems.

It is worth recalling that a strikingly similar policy was proposed nearly five decades ago at the beginning of the Great

Hughes, the national chauvinist, addresses a ‘Peace Loan’ rally in Sydney during World War I
Depression. It was put forward by Sir Otto Niemeyer, visiting Australia to represent the interests of British finance capital and impose on Australia a plan designed to serve those interests.

It is instructive to examine a criticism of this policy written in 1930 by none other than Billy Hughes. (“Bond or Free - Sir Otto Niemeyer’s Report, Reply by W M Hughes”.) Hughes was far from being a socialist. Indeed he had ‘ratted’ on the labor movement, twice tried unsuccessfully to push through conscription for World War 1 and in general represented the social chauvinist views so strong in all sectors of Australian society, including the working class. His small pamphlet analysing Niemeyer’s plan did not put forward a socialist or even radical alternative. Rather it set out a nationalist and populist view and represented an amalgam of popular interests with those of the manufacturing sector of business (and more generally of that section of the bourgeoisie which wanted Australia to be more independent).

Hughes characterised Niemeyer’s advice to Australian government thus:

*When he lectured them upon public finance and economics, emphasising their many grievous errors; painting the future of Australia in a blackness that could almost be felt, and then wound up by telling them that their only hope was to turn over a new leaf, reduce the standard of the people’s living; put aside their ill-advised ambitions to encourage Australian industries, and concentrate upon primary production - in which case the bank would help them - they humbly thanked him!* (p.2. All emphasis in original unless otherwise indicated.)

Hughes’ vision was of a strong, ‘free’ and white Australia. Mixed up in his case were racism, the special interests of industrial capital, and nationalism. It is nevertheless useful to follow his argument since it has considerable relevance to present circumstances.

Hughes was at pains to point out that Niemeyer represented ‘a private bank ... not the people of England, but great financial interests’. Dismissing Niemeyer’s talk about helping Australia with its British debt repayments, as a smokescreen, Hughes said that the real intention was ‘. to induce us to make a radical change in our national policy’.

*Compressed into a few words, Sir Otto wants us to scrap our policy of building up Australian industries and to confine ourselves to producing raw materials. And in order to do this - which he tells us is the only means of economic salvation - we must reduce our standard of living.* (p 5)

Putting it another way:

*We are to be “hewers of wood and drawers of water”! We are to produce the raw materials for Britain’s industry - and in order that Britain may be able to compete in the markets of the world, we must produce them cheaply - the cheaper the better. And this means, as Sir Otto very kindly pointed out to the heads of our Government, that we must “reduce our standard of living” and work harder, so that we may produce more raw materials at lower prices and yet contrive to exist.* (p 5)

The comparison between this policy of British capital and the one being currently pursued by Japanese and American capital is all too apparent. Hughes pointed out that Niemeyer also recommended a lowering of tariff rates which would make it even more difficult for Australian manufacturing industry. Sir Otto even trotted out the line on productivity and living standards which is currently being heavily pushed by business and political leaders. In his own words, as quoted by Hughes:

*There may be room for increased efficiency, but there seems to me little escape from concluding that Australian standards have been pushed too high relatively to Australian productivity and to general world conditions and tendencies. If Australia does not face that issue she will not be able to keep even those standards which she might hope to carry by taking timely action, and she will see an inevitable increase in unemployment.* (p 6)

Arguing against Sir Otto’s call for Australia to produce more food and raw materials, Hughes pointed out that “unless other countries produce less, the extra quantity we produce will make things
worse for us rather than better”. Noting that trade depression and unemployment are world-wide phenomena he says:

In the face of these facts, it is evident that the causes of unemployment are deep rooted in the system under which we live, and that the remedies which the people of Australia have been urged to adopt are worse than useless (p7)

Sir Otto seems to imagine that all that is necessary is to produce more wool, more wheat etc. But that is not the position at all. The trouble from which the world is suffering now is not under-production, but over-production. The reason why wool and wheat prices have fallen is because there is too much wool and wheat in the world - not too much for the world’s wants, perhaps, but for the world’s ability to purchase. And this applies not only to wool and wheat, but to most other raw materials and to goods generally. (p 8)

Therefore, Hughes argues, it would be fatal to Australian primary industries to produce more since this would only lead to even lower prices. He pointed to the paradoxical situation in Australia where trade was depressed, tens of thousands were unemployed and did not eat enough, yet around them there was profuse production in a ‘veritable Garden of Eden’. With a population of six million, Australia in that year (1930) would produce wheat to feed thirty million, wool to clothe 100 million ‘and meat, butter, dried fruits, sugar and other kinds of food and raw materials, including minerals and metals, sufficient for double or treble our present population.’ (p 9)

Given this, it was necessary to encourage Australian industries. Here Hughes threw in an appeal to racism, showing the peculiar fear of being ‘taken over’ by the surrounding coloured masses of Asia and the Pacific which was and is so much a part of the national consciousness. He called for a policy that would provide avenues of employment so that Australia could progress and be kept ‘white and free’. Despite this reactionary justification, his argument against Niemeyer was correct. Under Niemeyer’s policy, he said ‘barely one half of the present population could find employment, even if their standard of living were reduced to the level of, say, Britain. Growth of population would be impossible. (Growth of population was seen as necessary to stave off the external hordes - BA) (p10)

Examining the figures for 1911 and 1928, Hughes pointed out that while the population had increased by 39 per cent the number of people engaged in primary industries had decreased by 10.5 per cent. Yet this fewer number had produced a vastly greater quantity of primary products and cultivated 75 per cent more land. Given the problem of over-production it would not be possible to employ many more people in primary industry. Moreover, primary industry itself needed an expanded home market. This meant more people and greater per capita consumption, which could only be achieved if employment was provided for Australian and immigrant workers. Already, Hughes said, the manufacturing industries find employment for more people than the pastoral, dairying and agricultural industries combined. He concluded:

The welfare and progress of Australia are dependent upon the maintenance of a policy of encouragement of Australian industries. Instead of producing more of those things which have to be sold in the glutted markets of the world, we should concentrate on the production of those goods we want ourselves. (p 11)

Hughes also takes on the ‘wages are too high’ argument.

Money wages have increased, but real wages have remained almost stationary. During the last 18 years the real basic wage has advanced only 7.5d a day. In some cases wages have actually decreased. When one considers that these 18 years have been the most wonderful the world has ever seen, that during this period science and mechanical invention have very greatly increased the productivity of labor, it can hardly be contended that the workers’ share of the wealth produced is excessive. (p.13).

An interesting sidelight on this issue is an extract quoted by Hughes from a Report on Unemployment and Business Stability prepared by The Development and Migration Commission in June 1928:
The assumption frequently made that high wages is a major cause of fluctuations in employment in Australia is not borne out by the results so far obtained in this investigation, whatever effect it may or may not have on the average amount of employment over a period of years.

While today's circumstances are not the same as those of 1928 it is interesting to speculate on what light the above report might throw on the 'wage rises are pricing workers out of a job' line so much in vogue at the moment.

Pertinent to the argument of those who today claim that Australia's economic difficulties are unique and caused by too high wages is Hughes' observation that in Britain there were two million unemployed despite much lower wages than Australia. Another interesting parallel was the accusation against the Arbitration Court that it fixed artificially high wages. Hughes defends it against this charge, pointing out that when necessary the court was ready to reduce wages! Then, as now, while recognised as a very useful tool by business and the state at all times, the Arbitration Court in a time of crisis can often annoy sections of them by not taking what they regard as a hard enough line.

This excursion into history shows a number of things. Hughes did not provide a marxist analysis of the crisis - in fact some of his ideas, such as 'Demand alone creates values ....' are way out. Nor, despite some talk about the system being to blame, did he have any anti-capitalist perspective. His view was that things can be solved within the system to keep everyone happy in a land of plenty. Recognising that the crisis was international, he nevertheless proposed a narrow national solution for Australia as if it could cut itself off like a lost paradise in the southern oceans. His economic solutions were crudely consumptionist - reminiscent of the 'consumer-led recovery' theories today. He argued as if the highly developed manufacturing industry he desired could be created behind high tariff walls with workers paid high enough wages to buy the products. He seemed to ignore the big differences between the economic structures of Australia and America whose economic policies he set up as an example to be followed. Efficient industries like America's in a small country such as Australia can only be the result of conscious social planning to provide the investment funds. But precisely because of this his analysis has its uses.

In the first place, it should be remembered that Niemeyer's scheme, basically endorsed in the Premiers' Plan, failed to lift Australia out of the rut of the Depression. And it was NSW Labor Premier Lang's call for a moratorium on the Debt repayments (having voted for the Plan inside the conference) which led to his dismissal by Governor Game. Similarly, the plan to make us primarily a raw materials supplier for Japan, America and Western Europe cannot solve the current problems of inflation and unemployment.

All this illustrates that the special weaknesses of Australian capitalism have remained and provide the particular features of our economic crisis. We do depend more on raw materials exports and our manufacturing industry is weaker than in most other advanced capitalist countries. And the political weakness flowing from this economic weakness together with the semi-colonial ties with Britain are as apparent now as they were then. In 1932, Lang's dismissal served the interests of British capital. In 1975, Kerr's use of relic powers had hardly anything to do with Britain at all. It was rather a useful instrument waiting to be used by all the forces, local and international, which thought their own interests demanded the removal of the Labor government.

These economic and political realities, as in the Depression years, are today forcing ruling circles to 'get tough' and expose the myths of classlessness, equality and democracy which are the ideological props of the system. Policies to overcome these special weaknesses of Australia's position must be one part of socialist transitional policies. Put in the right way such policies can attract people, and mobilise the class and national independence sentiments which are growing in opposition to Fraser's policies. They can also combat the narrow nationalism, bourgeois or populist, which may arise as a modern echo of Billy Hughes.

B.A.
9.2.77.
ROGERIO LOBATO is Minister for National Defence in the government of the Democratic Republic of East Timor, and commander of FALINTIL (East Timor National Liberation Forces).

He was sent out of East Timor with three other Ministers, by his government, a few days before the full-scale Indonesian invasion on December 7, 1975 to carry out the important diplomatic struggle abroad and to seek support for the war against the Indonesian invaders.

Mr. Lobato has remained in constant contact with his government in the liberated areas of East Timor. His whole family, including his elder brother, Nicolau Lobato, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of East Timor, remain inside East Timor.

In the past year Rogerio Lobato has visited many countries including China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Cuba, Mozambique and Angola, where he has also studied the liberation struggles of these countries against imperialism.

As an officer in the Portuguese colonial army, Rogerio Lobato played a key role in rallying Timorese soldiers to defeat the reactionary coup attempt by the UDT group in August 1975. He also played an important role in containing the Indonesian invasion along the border with Indonesian Timor from September to December 1975.

This exclusive interview, made in Europe in January 1977, gives an excellent insight into the heroic struggle of the East Timorese people against the invasion. What emerges quite clearly is that the struggle is not simply a spontaneous one, but one led by Fretilin, equipped with a clear concept of the nature of the struggle, of a people's war, specifically adapted to the conditions of East Timor.
What is the military strategy Fretilin forces are following in East Timor?

Our strategy is defensive; we are not fighting a positional war. But as part of this strategy, we launch many small offensives, at the level of guerrilla attacks, or with a concentration of a large number of troops.

For example, when the Indonesians advance with many troops, we avoid facing them directly. But whenever there is the opportunity of destroying a part of this force, or of an ambush, we will attack. Through our intelligence service, we get information on the number of troops operating in certain areas. Then, against smaller groups of the enemy, we will use very big concentrations of our forces to annihilate them.

Our strategy is to defeat and liquidate the enemy - not just defeat them, and have them run away to fight another day.

If for example the enemy advances with 100 troops, we will attack with 500 and close all possibility for them to retreat and destroy them completely.

Similarly, if the enemy leaves a garrison of 100 or 200 troops in a village or to protect the road, then it is good for us. We study carefully their situation and prepare very carefully a plan of attack, using a force several times greater than theirs. We attack by surprise, often at night, to win a short, sharp victory, to annihilate the enemy totally, and capture their war materials and medical supplies, before they can call reinforcements.

So, in general, the enemy is on the offensive, but we make small offensives within our defensive strategy.

Our strategy is that we want to destroy as many of the enemy forces as possible and conserve our own forces. We therefore disperse our forces, but concentrate them to destroy the enemy and disperse them immediately after having carried out the attack.

Secondly, we seek to capture the maximum amount of war materials from the enemy, to conserve our own resources and to build a situation where we equal the enemy in numbers and military equipment. Then we will go to an offensive strategy, to inflict a final defeat on them.

We seek to kill as many enemy soldiers as possible, and minimise our own casualties. We seek to capture as many weapons and as much ammunition as possible, and use as little of our own stocks as possible.

Another factor in our strategy for a protracted war arises from our analysis of the enemy. In general, the enemy faces very big economic problems and so cannot face
the perspective of a long war against Fretilin. Our tactics are not only to kill as many enemy troops as possible, but also to destroy them economically.

So we must cut all the roads, destroy all the bridges and force the enemy to move by expensive means - helicopters, planes, warships.

Could you give some examples of how this strategy is applied?

On the road south of Manatuto to Laklubar, we have destroyed the road at a mountain pass at Henuk.

On the south coast, where conditions are very bad for the enemy to move, even during the dry season, we have made it more impossible for them to move.

We have changed the courses of rivers to flood the plains and stop tanks moving ahead. At the same time, we developed tactics to capture tanks - a technique used by the Vietnamese and Cambodians. We have captured some tanks and destroyed many tanks and armoured cars. Similarly, in fighting against helicopters we have also learnt many techniques used in Vietnam and Cambodia in their national liberation wars against American imperialism.

We take many days to prepare an ambush. We know the exact number of enemy forces. We mobilise the people in the area to go to there. Our plans are completely secret. Each soldier knows exactly his own tasks, what he must do, whom he must shoot and when. At every ambush, a well-trained commander is present.

For example, the enemy tried to go in a big convoy from Dili to Manatuto, along the main North coast road. We let them go as far as Subao, a very difficult part of the road which winds around a very steep cliff face, going straight into the sea. We planned the ambush - trenches were dug and each soldier given exact instructions. We shot the drivers of the last and the first vehicles. The enemy was confused, whether to go forward or retreat, neither of which were possible. We hit with the maximum force and surprise, with our troops as close as 20 metres from the enemy. The enemy is very afraid of fighting at close hand because they cannot use their artillery. We completely destroyed that convoy. And since then the enemy has not tried to use that road.

In the many attacks on enemy camps, we follow a similar tactic. First we must take them by surprise in a well planned attack. The guards must be removed silently, then, with a very big force, we overwhelm the enemy in a short period, capturing their weapons and withdrawing immediately. Secondary forces on the roads stop reinforcements reaching the camp attacked.

And how do you estimate the enemy's strategy in East Timor?

The Jakarta generals are seeking to divide East Timor into compartments - by cutting the territory from north to south and controlling the roads which cross the country. This can be seen by looking at a map of East Timor and the areas penetrated by the enemy.

For instance, they landed at Dili, and went south down the road to Aileu and Maubisse. They landed at Betano, and went north to Same, to link up with their forces in Maubisse.

In achieving this strategy, they used as a tactic the deployment of a very big force, covered by bombing planes, warships and heavy artillery, and using tanks and armoured vehicles to move down these roads.

In face of this massive attack, Fretilin retreats, but not passively. At some other time we will fight, ambushing the enemy, attacking smaller units.

The enemy hopes to stop Falintil moving freely throughout the territory. They want to bottle Fretilin forces in small areas. To do that garrisons of one or two hundred are left along the road, and in smaller villages.

But that is good for Fretilin. We can concentrate three or four times the number of their garrisons and wipe them out in a well-prepared surprise attack, one by one.

That is why the Indonesian forces only control these roads theoretically. In practice, we can move freely throughout the territory. So the enemy strategy is a failure.
They don’t go off the roads into the surrounding mountains. They only go where tanks can go. To climb the mountains is to be an easy target for Fretilin. It is very difficult for the Indonesians to fight in East Timor, because they don’t know where Fretilin is - Fretilin is everywhere. Moreover, the Indonesians are fighting in a strange country - they don’t know the terrain.

How are Fretilin forces organised?

The Fretilin forces are divided into four sections.

First there is the regular army, made up of all Timorese troops that were in the Portuguese colonial army and all Timorese who had already done military service and were in the reserves. These troops are very mobile and have the task of fighting all over the country - from the border to Tutuala. They are the troops who can concentrate for a large scale attack and then disperse to conserve our forces.

Second, there are the regional troops which operate only in a certain region, for example, from Baucau to Viqueque. When attacks are made, the regional troops coordinate with the regular troops.

Third are the guerrillas. Mainly composed of militia they operate in very small areas and are very widespread. They coordinate with the regular and regional troops for attacks.

And finally there are the self-defence forces, composed of a big majority of the people. They fight with everything useful to kill the enemy. They rely mainly on traditional weapons - bows and arrows, blowpipes, traps. They also combine with the regular, regional and guerrilla forces for actions.

That is why the war we are fighting in East Timor is a people’s war - all the people are engaged in the struggle, but with different tasks both militarily and on other fronts.
And one of those other fronts is to produce food?

Yes, that’s a very important front in the struggle. And it’s not just a task for the people but for the army too. Together, the people and Falintil work together to produce all they need to eat, to maintain the struggle.

Every military unit has its own gardens. How do the soldiers fight and yet maintain their gardens?

It is very simple. They must create conditions where they have the possibility of a break from fighting to work in the gardens, to feed themselves. The gardens are very far from Indonesian-controlled areas where it is difficult for the enemy to infiltrate.

Not only has there been a very big increase in the area of rice fields, but we have also begun agriculture in the forests.

When a unit is, say, operating from a forest for one or two weeks, they plant all they need - tapioca, sweet potatoes, marrows, etc. When they return in a month or so, they find there a store of crops to feed themselves. Moreover, there is plenty of wild game in the forests - wild deer, buffalo, cassowaries etc. Our people know very well how to hunt such game with traditional weapons - there is no need to use ammunition.

Not only are we growing more food, but we are also trying to improve the nutrition of the people, to give them better, more varied food than they have had in the past.

We also encourage people living in one village to learn from one another. For example, there is one village in East Timor where they have a highly developed system of firing arrows on an artillery basis which fall in a rain of arrows on the head and body of a wild animal. It is a system used for hundreds of years. Now, not only is that village using this system to catch game, but also to fight the enemy. - and they are teaching it to other villages. Previously they kept it a closely guarded secret.

Nevertheless, many people in Australia think that the people of East Timor must be starving...

In colonial times in East Timor, even with the terrible exploitation of the people by the Portuguese colonialists, there was never starvation in the country. No one has died of hunger for hundreds of years. When the Portuguese said the people were hungry, they meant they had no protein in their diet. In fact, the people always had enough food to eat, but not good enough in quality - in protein and nutritional value.

Today, as I said, Fretilin is trying to solve that problem too.

In the forests there are traditional foods. For instance, wild beans grow in plenty, but they have to be cooked six or seven times to get rid of the poison. The people gathered them in times when there was not enough rice or corn. There are sago palms and wild leaves that can be eaten, and have been for hundreds of years.

When people in Australia say that, maybe they are thinking about living standards in Australia.

You must understand that, under Portuguese colonialism, the people were divided; they were discouraged from working in groups or collectively.

Now, led by Fretilin, they have formed cooperatives throughout the country, and work collectively, to support each other very tightly. Now they can grow more food together than they ever could individually. You must remember, too, that we have many types of corn and rice, including rice that grows in the mountains.

How do the people cope with attempts by the enemy to destroy food crops and supplies?

The enemy cannot go by foot into the liberated areas, so they try to destroy crops by bombing.

But the people are mobilised. They find ways to continue production even under bombing. We have the examples of Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea where the people grew enough to eat to fight a thirty year struggle under very heavy bombing. The Indonesians do not have the potential to match the US airforce and cover East Timor with bombs.

It is the policy of the Indonesians to kill, burn and destroy everything in East Timor.
This has been their strategy, is now their strategy and will continue to be their strategy.

They do this in the hope that they will destroy the people’s possibility to resist. But when they burn and destroy everything in the areas they control, they are also in difficulties, because they too must eat. They are used to everything - beef, beer, good houses. So when they destroy everything around them, they face starvation.

But our army and people live in the forests. We are used to living, after 400 years of Portuguese colonialism, in bad conditions, and we can adapt.

So the enemy are in villages surrounded by burnt out fields, under constant attack going hungry. They begin to fight each other, disobey their officers and want to get back home. Above all they refuse to go into the forests.

Our strategy of never defending positions against large forces, and of concentrating our efforts on destroying enemy forces, of killing their human forces, increases this demoralisation.

What is the relationship between Falintil and the Fretilin Central Committee?

Falintil are the armed forces of the people of East Timor under the direct command of the Fretilin Central Committee. Senior commanders of Falintil are members of the Fretilin Central Committee.

It is therefore under the leadership of Fretilin and follows the political line of Fretilin, as the armed wing of the people of East Timor.

I want to stress that in the army, politics is, and always will be, supreme.

In all Falintil forces, we have political commissioners. Each military unit, down to a group of thirty fighters, has a political commissioner. He fights in the war, but his main task is to lead the soldiers to follow the correct military and political line. Ideological education takes place in all military units, particularly concerning the correct way for fighters to deal with the people. When, for example, guerrillas arrive at a farm and are very hungry, they must
never simply take food, but must ask the
people for it. And if the fighters have food
and the people are hungry they must share
their food with them. If the people are sick,
they must help them as much as possible.

Another important question for political
commissioners to explain is a correct attitude
to Indonesian soldiers. Of course, the
invading forces have committed terrible
atrocities and it is not easy for the people and
soldiers to have a correct position on this
question. At the beginning, the people killed
many of the Indonesian soldiers who were
captured.

But the position of the Fretilin Central
Committee is very clear on this question. We
have to re-educate the Indonesian soldiers on
the aims of Indonesian colonial aggression.
We have to tell them to turn their guns not
against the people of East Timor, who are
their brothers and sisters, but against the
Suharto clique, who are also exploiting the
Indonesian people.

So, our political commissioners teach the
people and army to behave like revolutionary
soldiers towards the enemy soldiers.

Are you in a position to tell us how many
Indonesian soldiers are prisoners of
war in the liberated areas?

Yes. There are hundreds of Indonesian
prisoners throughout East Timor. Many are
in re-education camps, including many
officers. Few of our people speak Bahasa
Indonesia, so we get those prisoners who
speak English to teach some of our people
Bahasa.

And what of the ex-UDT and ex-
APODETI who supported the
Indonesian invasion? What role are
these puppets playing in the war?

The puppets in Dili are powerless. They are
not armed because the Indonesian generals
don’t trust them any more. They are not even
in the police force in Dili. Only Indonesians
are allowed to carry arms.

Many people captured by the Indonesians
have escaped from the terrible conditions in
the concentration camps the enemy set up.
They have been welcomed back, and joined
the fight.

But the puppets are afraid to return to the
liberated areas. Not because of the attitude
of the Fretilin Central Committee, but because
of the hatred of the people for those, who
have contributed so much to the present
conditions in East Timor. But Fretilin policy
is that all people can be re-educated and re-
habilitated, and we want the puppets to leave
Dili and join us in the mountains. In fact, we
teach the people to accept this principle, not
to kill them, but to liberate everyone.

Of course, the top puppets, those most
responsible for the present situation, must be
judged by the people themselves who must
decide their sentence.

We are fighting for a society in which the
people make the decisions. We don’t want to
be authoritarian. The people have the right
to speak and say what they think.

What is the proportion of territory and
of the population now living in the
liberated areas?

In East Timor, it is a people’s war, so we
need people to fight. We do everything we can
to have as many people as possible in the
liberated areas. This was a strategy we
followed even before the fullscale invasion.

About 90 percent of the population are in
the liberated areas. The rest are under
Indonesian control, in very bad conditions in
concentration camps, where they are
starving, subject to rape and all sorts of
humiliation and to summary execution. The
people in these camps try to escape and join
the liberated areas. Fretilin forces do
everything possible to help them get away.

Earlier, when we were speaking about
whether people were starving in the liberated
areas, I should have stressed that the ones
really starving are those who are prisoners of
the Indonesians. They are forbidden to go
into the forests to gather food because the
Indonesians fear they will join Fretilin.
Anyone trying to go to the forests runs the
risk of being shot by the enemy.

Fretilin forces have launched many
attacks to liberate the captured population
and thousands have already been liberated.

Our strategy is to eventually reach a
situation where the Indonesians are alone in
the areas they control and literally the whole
How East Timor Fights On

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population is in the liberated areas fighting a people’s war against the invaders.

Fretilin today controls over 85 percent of the territory. And the remaining 15 percent or less controlled by the enemy includes the enclave of Oe-Cussi and the small island of Atauro, which are completely under Indonesian control.

The Indonesians control some towns like Dili, Baucau, Maubisse, Aileu, etc. But even in these towns they are under constant attack. The enemy is forced to concentrate their troops to protect these towns, and the enemy soldiers want to stay there, not fight, but spend their time in the towns.

The Indonesian troops only spend a certain time in East Timor - six months, then go back home, to be replaced by fresh troops. Of course, the ordinary Indonesian soldier doesn’t want to risk being killed in those six months. They therefore avoid fighting as much as possible, wanting to return to Indonesia as heroes, rather than for burial.

The Indonesian generals sit in Jakarta or even Dili, make their plans on maps and order their soldiers to fight to carry them out. But the Indonesian soldiers are now realising, after suffering very big casualties, that they cannot win the war. They just want to live and go home.

The links between the Indonesian soldiers and their officers are those peculiar to a fascist army. The soldiers are kept completely apart from their officers. The senior officers stay in Dili and Baucau. There, the officers spend most of their time organising businesses - bars and restaurants etc. - and encourage the ordinary soldiers to spend their money there instead of sending it to their families. And so the officers make a lot of money from corruption.

So the ordinary Indonesian soldier can see he is being asked to die to defend the Indonesian generals who are making big money in Dili and Baucau while they are fighting in the mountains.

They know their families and relatives are starving in Indonesia. The soldier is one of the most privileged in a village in relation to others, so he is expected to keep an extended family - not only his immediate family, but relations. Who feeds these people if the soldier dies in East Timor?
The more Indonesian soldiers are sent to East Timor, the more will be the discontent in Indonesia.

The enemy can't move by roads so much transportation is by sea or by air.

**How do you see the situation developing in the coming months?**

It is better for Fretilin in the present wet season.

It is difficult for the enemy to move because he relies on tanks and armoured vehicles which are difficult to move on the roads and across the flooded rivers. So Fretilin is in a better position to attack. In the wet season too, we can recover our strength, heal the wounded, and tend the crops. I hope Fretilin will be able in the coming months, to recover some of the villages the Indonesians have taken. It is logical that we will be able to do that as in the last dry season we took back many villages. We expected a big offensive by the enemy in the last dry season, but we launched one instead. That demoralised many Indonesian soldiers.

I am sure the present wet season will completely change things. We are in a good position to attack, because we don't rely on tanks. We move on horseback or by foot.

The enemy finds it very difficult in the wet season, when it rains for weeks on end. We are used to it ...

**Turning to the question of health: there are no doctors in the liberated areas now. Many people in Australia wonder how you can survive?**

Actually, there may be an Indian doctor still in the liberated area, but I am not sure if he is still alive...

But there are many highly trained and experienced nurses who are working hard to support the struggle and train "barefoot doctors" to try to solve the problems of looking after the wounded and sick. We have many problems to resolve after this war and our nurses will be competent to solve many of them.

We are using traditional medicines. East Timor has a very highly developed system of traditional medicine. According to custom, all this traditional medical knowledge was passed on by the traditional doctor to his eldest son. He held a strong position in the village and traditional structure. Now Fretilin has been able to persuade the traditional doctors to share their knowledge with the whole people. Some of them are still conservative, but many others have joined in the campaign through the appeal made by Fretilin Central Committee, and are teaching all the young people traditional medicine.

For hundreds of years these traditional medicines, prepared from herbs, barks and roots etc... have been used to cure malaria and other diseases and infections and heal broken limbs. There are traditional medicines, for example, which can be very successfully used as anaesthetics to enable operations on wounded soldiers.

Many of the herbs I have seen used in traditional medicines in China, for example, are similar to those used in East Timor.

You know that under Portuguese colonialism, there were never enough doctors and nurses. People had to solve medical problems with traditional medicines, and that knowledge has remained intact.

Is the anti-illiteracy campaign continuing under war conditions?

The anti-illiteracy campaign has been intensified in the past year. It is clearly important, even from a military point of view, that people can read and write. But it is also important that they can explain and understand Fretilin ideology. Over 50,000 people are now in the anti-illiteracy courses - not just children, but all ages. The anti-illiteracy campaign is also continuing inside Falintil.

The Political Bureau of the Fretilin Central Committee is in charge of the anti-illiteracy campaign and everywhere the people are mobilised to take part in it. It is not simply anti-illiteracy, but also political education about the nature of Indonesian aggression etc. Most primary school teachers escaped the invasion and are now in Fretilin's ranks. They form the basis for this campaign.

In addition, we are reviving our traditional culture - songs, dances, etc. - and, in general, to think our own way, not in the way the colonialists taught us.
We also have to revive many traditional means of expression - traditional oratory, which contained a rich history of our people, of oppression and resistance. These speeches, learnt by heart, by the orators, are the basis for our future literature. Many old men and their knowledge may die in this war but we must preserve their knowledge - they are living libraries.

But, in addition, while preserving our culture, we must introduce new things, and also learn from the people. Those who have been to agriculture college know many things, but how to apply them and how to adapt them can only be learnt through working with the people.

What is the situation now in West Timor?

Fretilin respects the integrity of the Indonesian Republic. But, of course, when the Indonesians attack us, we can also counter-attack. The larger areas we can fight in, the better for us. So we will help all movements against Suharto, and we will help the liberation movement in West Timor too. We are not expansionist, like Suharto, and when the other side (in West Timor) is liberated, they will be Indonesians. We want to help them in all ways.

Suharto is trying to extinguish the fire in East Timor, but in fact he is pouring oil on the fire. Not only in East Timor, but also in West Timor. We will help them until the complete defeat of Suharto.

The next leader of Indonesia must pay attention to the problem of East Timor.

We will never surrender to Suharto, or any other leaders of Indonesia, we will fight them and help all movements fighting them.

In West Timor, we know through refugees and from other sources, that there are over 1000 West Timorese guerrillas fighting there, helped by Fretilin.
THE POLLUTED OCEAN

R.A. PRIEST

This is the first of two parts of an article by seaman R.A. Priest which we reprint from the Seamen's Journal, June and July issues, 1976.

The oceans and seas of the world contain 330,000 cubic miles of water, covering most of the planet except for 29 per cent of the surface which is occupied by the continental land masses.

The floor of the ocean has mountains, valleys, escarpments, plains, shelves, volcanoes, and rolling hills, far more spectacular than any to be found on land.

The mid-oceanic ridge is a continuous mountain chain running submerged for 40,000 miles and equal in area to all the continents. It varies in height from 1,000 to 10,000 feet and is seldom less than 700 miles wide.

The deepest trench is the Philippines Trench which descends to a depth of 37,782 feet; compare this with the Grand Canyon which is a mere 4,000 feet deep.

The dimensions of the ocean sound impressive, but its chemical and physical properties are far more impressive. Although they are extremely complex, they have remained virtually constant for hundreds of millions of years. Such a constant balance is dependent on extremely subtle controls which allow the ocean to respond flexibly to external changes and to balance its own internal processes.

VITAL TO LIFE

In this article, I will endeavour to set out some of the ways in which man is upsetting these subtle controls but, first, we must look at the functions of the ocean in maintaining the balance of life on this planet.

The ocean is not just one big puddle of spectacular dimensions. In fact, it is continuously active. Without these activities, life on this planet would cease to exist.

Let's now look at some of these activities.

Heat energy is being continuously absorbed from the sun and mechanical energy from the winds. Carbon dioxide and other gases are being breathed in from the atmosphere. It absorbs huge amounts of a large variety of materials which arrive via rivers, rain, snow and melting polar ice.

The ocean mixes all these materials and distributes the sun's heat energy, releasing heat to the atmosphere. It breathes out oxygen and other gases, eliminates excess materials by sedimentation and the formation of sedimentary rocks.

So, as you can see, the ocean is more than just a place in which to float ships.

Seawater is very rich chemically and contains in solution almost every known element. This is due to its ability to dissolve chemicals and to the wide range of chemicals which enter it.

The relative proportions of seawater have probably remained constant for the past 600 million years. When considering the vast and many chemical changes that have occurred on land during the same period, this fact becomes very relevant.
Although we do not fully understand the elaborate controls which maintain seawater's rich composition, the fact that this composition is maintained must be one of the biggest factors controlling the whole ecological balance of the planet.

The ocean achieves this by being in perpetual motion (it was recently discovered that even the deepest parts, previously thought to be stagnant, are moved by powerful currents). This continual movement acts like a gargantuan cocktail shaker mixing up all the chemicals thoroughly.

GLOBAL THERMOSTAT

Another important job that the ocean does for us is in its role as the global thermostat. If it was not for the sea, our continents would experience temperatures like those on the surface of the moon.

Seawater has a capacity to store heat exceeded only by liquid ammonia. This implies that it requires an enormous quantity of heat to increase the temperature of the ocean by the smallest amount, which means that the temperature of the ocean changes much more slowly than that of the atmosphere above it.

For instance, a one per cent increase in the quantity of solar energy reaching the earth would raise the atmospheric temperature by 15°C, while it would only raise the ocean temperature by a mere 0.01°C.

The temperature of the ocean is so constant that it acts as a stabilising influence on the temperature of the continental land masses and the atmosphere. This function is also helped by the ocean movement which brings down cold polar water to cool the equatorial regions.

ORIGIN OF LIFE

The next function of the oceans we can look at is the creation and maintenance of living organisms, including man.

It is thought that life originated in the sea over 3,000 million years ago.

The similarity in chemical composition of all living organisms is surprising. It is even more surprising that their composition is similar to that of seawater.

Even man, who likes to consider himself as a superior life form, carries within his body a portable ocean. Blood plasma and other bodily fluids are peculiarly similar to brackish seawater and we all start life as a foetus floating in a sea of amniotic fluid.

Now scientists maintain that the ocean has its own blood stream and that seawater performs much the same function as blood plasma. It provides a constant environment and acts as a transport medium for nutrients, waste products, dissolved gases and heat.

It is obvious that the ocean has been a dominant influence in the development of life on our planet. The shared chemical composition of seawater and living organisms is, therefore, no coincidence.

The four major forms of life all started in the sea.

The first is Monera, a primitive one-cell organism with a very simple internal structure. They exist today as bacteria and algae.

The second group is known as protista and has the ability for photosynthesis (process by which green plants use the energy of sunlight to build up complex materials from carbon dioxide and water). This group is multi-cellular and more complex. They can be seen as seaweed, fungi, slime and protozoa.

The third group is metazoa. They were as complex as the protista but could not photosynthesise and therefore had to obtain energy by eating protista or each other. Their descendants include sponges and all animal life.

The fourth group, which appeared much later, was the metaphyta which evolved from seaweed-like protista. Descendants of this group are mosses, ferns, plants, and trees.

The first group to leave the sea and establish itself on land was the metaphyta, followed closely by the metazoa. For much of the history of life it has been mainly a marine phenomenon, but its transition to land required only slight modifications. In fact, since then many animals have returned to the sea (i.e. whales).

The most abundant form of life is still marine life, the basis of which is plant life.

This marine plant life, most of which is
microscopic and floats freely on the surface bathing in sunlight, taps solar energy by photosynthesis and converts it to the chemical energy which fuels all other forms of life. This stuff floating all over the ocean is called phytoplankton and is a critically important, if little appreciated, form of life. Later on we will see that it could also be our undoing.

Sea life is distributed in such a way that the open ocean is far less productive than the coastal areas. This is caused by the availability of essential nutrients which are more abundant in coastal areas due to the run off from the land. It is in these areas that man finds most of his seafood and dumps most of his wastes.

Now that we have a brief idea of how the ocean works and how important it is to the balance of nature, we can proceed to investigate how we may be upsetting this balance - for, with no life in the seas, there would be no life for humanity.

**TAKING LIFE OUT OF THE OCEAN**

Most ecological problems are caused by man putting something into the environment. This certainly is one of the reasons for the decline of life in the seas but, in this section, we will deal with another aspect of that decline - the exploitation of the sea; taking life out of it.

The ocean is man's last hunting ground and he is busy indiscriminately removing everything he can find in it.

It is now known that sea life is not infinite and consequently the amount we can take without depleting populations or causing the extinction of species is limited.

Overhunting of the oceans is at an incredible level and is inexcusable. The species in most danger are marine mammals, including the whale.

Modern whaling is aided by harpoons with explosive tips and factory ships which process carcasses on the spot. These innovations have escalated the annual kill since the day of the old whaler, although even then - 100 years ago - concern for the numbers of whale taken was being expressed in some quarters. Herman Melville was moved to ask "whether leviathan can long endure so wide a chase, and so remorseless a havoc?"

**SAD TRUTH**

As recently as 12 years ago, 65 per cent of the annual world kill was taken in Antarctic waters. It has since dropped to 10 per cent. The yield of whale oil has dropped from 2,000,000 barrels to 400,000 during the same period.

This doesn't mean that we aren't trying to catch that many any more. No. the sad truth is that there just aren't many whales left.

The majority of the world catch is taken by the Soviet Union (43 per cent) and Japan (42 per cent) with the remaining 15 per cent going to a number of countries including Australia (1.5 per cent).

Not only is the whaling industry digging its own grave but it has yet to grasp that uncontrolled hunting is economic suicide, to say nothing of the butchery of a beautiful and useful marine species.

**BALANCE UPSET**

Now, I can hear you saying “What about the International Whaling Commission?”

This Commission was set up to regulate the industry but they have been very slow to take any effective action. They set quotas to limit each nation’s catch but do so by weight rather than species. The quotas have done little to halt the depletion of stocks.

You may ask: “Why worry about whales, how are they so important?” To answer that, we must look at the ecological role of whales.

The whale’s diet consists of microscopic shrimp-like krill and other forms of plankton. The whale consumes these in such large quantities that he is an important factor in the control of the krill population. Removing the whale will upset the balance between plankton and other marine organisms.

Other mammals also have problems. Schools of yellowfin tuna always have a small porpoise as an inseparable companion. When the tuna are netted, so is the porpoise which often panics and dies. On the west coast of North America, a quarter of a million died this way in 1970.
No one knows why this bond between the small porpoise and the yellowfin tuna exists, but no doubt it serves some useful purpose. Man will probably discover its meaning after he has severed the bond.

**FISH EXPLOITATION**

Getting away from mammals, let us look at the fish scene. Not only whales but also fish are being exploited out of existence.

The first indication that something was wrong was from an observation during experiments carried out in the North Sea before the First World War. It was noticed that the size of plaice being caught was getting smaller and that larger fish were being removed at a greater rate than small fish could replace them.

Scientists tagged some fish and released them. Up to 70 per cent of the tagged fish were re-caught the very next season, suggesting that that amount of the total stock was being removed every year.

The nations which at that time fished in the North Sea could not agree on suggestions for restoring the stock but, after 1914, were too busy killing each other to worry anyway.

The period 1914-1918 was a great time for the fish. Their problems were solved for a while as fishing in the North Sea became an extremely dangerous pastime.

After the war, fishermen found their catches were back to what they had enjoyed previously. The plaice had had a respite, but not for long. By the end of the 1920s, less fish were being caught and their average size was once again diminishing.

**DUBIOUS BLESSINGS**

The Second World War came to their rescue once more and the fish responded by increasing their stocks and their average size.

The lessons learned in the North Sea led to a study of the effects of over-fishing on fish populations - a study which is far from complete.

Since the Second World War, big business and technology have bestowed their rather dubious blessings on the fishing industry and, in doing so, have accelerated its passage along the road to ultimate collapse.

Their much vaunted increases in yield have been so “successful” that fishery after fishery has sunk into commercial extinction. It is predicted that by 1985 the maximum sustainable world catch of between 100 and 200 million cubic tons could be reached.

The world fish catch increased ten-fold in the century from 1850 to 1950, doubled in the next decade and increased by half in the decade after that.

The problem is that, rather than spread the load among a wide variety of fish species in a wide range of locations, the fishing industry has concentrated on attacking those particular species which sell well and on attacking them where they concentrate for breeding and migrating. All this for economic reasons, of course.

Out of 20,000 species, only five are required to make up a third of the world catch.

The Peruvian anchoveta, weighing in at 10.4 million tons, tops the list followed by the Atlantic herring, at 3.8 million tons.

These two species are used for fishmeal and fishoil industries and are obliging for the fishermen by their habit of forming into vast shoals.

The other three main species are the Atlantic cod, the Alaskan wall-eye pollack and the South African pilchard.

**SMALL AREA**

All these fish come from a small area and it is estimated that an area the size of California produces about half the world's fish supply. While half the world's fishing grounds are being fished to exhaustion, the other half remains virtually untapped.

The reasons for this are completely economic. The biggest market for fish is the fishmeal industry. This industry requires large, expensive processing plants sited close to their source of supply, plus a continual supply of fish.

When the supply exceeds the sustainable yield of the fish ground, as it usually does after a short time, then it is too bad.

A case in point is the Peruvian anchoveta industry, which has risen from a minor fishery with a catch under half a million tons to the world's biggest single species fishery
with annual catches over ten million tons. In
the process, it has made Peru the world’s
leading fishing nation.

This was only achieved by investment of
vast amounts of capital. From 1957 to 1962,
the anchovy catch increased fourteen-fold.
The best year was 1970 with a mammoth
catch of 12.6 million tons, well above the
sustainable level.

HALT CALLED

A halt was finally called by the Peruvian
Government in 1971 and fishing was banned
for three months. The season’s catch was
limited to ten million tons, which also
exceeded the sustainable yield.

Unfortunately, the reasons for this action
were economic and not ecological. The
government had decided to cut production of
fishmeal to keep the prices high.

The fishmeal industry is probably one of
the most wasteful users of the ocean’s
resources. A ten million ton catch of
anchovies could produce enough protein
concentrate to combat the protein
deficiencies of all the people of Latin
America. Instead, it is reduced to two million
tons of fishmeal and exported to nations to
feed livestock and poultry.

This means that one source of protein is
being used to produce another source of
protein, but the people who get to eat the
pork, steaks, and turkeys don’t need that
protein as much as those in the nations
where the fish was caught.

STARVATION AND DISEASE

It is in the developing countries that fish
protein is most needed because it is in these
countries that the population explosion is
most marked.

In fact, these countries only a decade ago
used to export grain but now have to import it
from the developed countries. The net result
of this is starvation, disease and misery.

The most important aspect of starvation is
a lack of protein. Severe protein deficiency
leads to diseases such as kwashiorkor, which
strikes children and is characterised by
prospective distention of the stomach
(remember the pictures of Biafran and
Ethiopian children).

In many of these countries, the majority of
what little protein is available is derived
from fish. On the other hand, in developed
countries where the population is almost
static, the consumption of fish protein is
exploding. This is caused by the increasing
use of fishmeal to feed poultry and pigs, etc.

Already over half the US poultry feed is
fishmeal. One cannot help feeling that the
fish would be better used directly as food for
humans.

However, it is unlikely that the wasteful
use of an increasingly large proportion of the
world fish catch for fishmeal will be
curtailed, as this would cause the poultry
industry to collapse. It would also be an
embarrassment to the pig-raising industry.

The fishmeal industry is not only harming
the balance of the ocean’s ecological
structure but it is also widening the gap
between rich and poor nations.

Consider the fact that three-quarters of the
world catch is landed by 14 out of 200 fishing
nations. Of these, only one, Peru, could be
described as a developing nation.

NOT ONLY VICTIMS

Whales and fish are not the only victims of
over-hunting. Crustacea, especially shrimps,
are also being widely over-fished.

The annual shrimp catch in the USA was
6.3 million pounds in 1936. Two decades later
it had crashed to 10,000 pounds.

Coastal pollution no doubt played a
considerable part in this collapse but it was
not the only reason.

There is no doubt that the mass removal of
living organisms from the sea has a bad
effect when it has commercial implications.

An example is, once again, the Peruvian
anchovy industry. Anchovy are an
important source of food for the guano bird
which, in turn, produces nitrogenous guano
fertiliser. Obviously, no anchovy and no
guano bird equals no fertiliser. A simple
equation isn’t it?

The simple fact is that the combined effect
of pollution and over-fishing is putting at
risk one of man’s greatest food resources at a
time when he needs it most.
Australian capitalism has always had to reconcile the interests of two of its class fractions: the dominant industrial fraction on the one hand, and rural capital on the other. (1)

Solving this problem produced important effects at both the economic and political levels. Tracing the form of this ‘solution’ over the years is one way to produce a history of Australian capitalism.

But now there is a new factor which demands notice.

The rapid growth of the mineral sector from the middle 1960s has not only had a significant effect on the structure of other sectors, it has also threatened to disrupt relationships between the corresponding capitalist class fractions.

It is the role of the capitalist state to organise what Gramsci called the ‘unstable equilibrium of compromise’ between these competing fractions. It must ensure that contradictions between them never swamp what remains, for the capitalists, the main contradiction: that between the capitalist class as a whole and its enemy, the working class.

If the state fails to do this and the working class and its allies can exploit contradictions between fractions of capital the path is open to neutralise parts of the state apparatus prior to a general working class assault upon it.

It’s this sort of a breach the working class must always be looking for. While the current
struggle between different fractions of capital has not reached this stage of an open breach - and is unlikely to, given the balance of forces and room still left to manoeuvre - it's still worth working out what different fractions are up to.

A RURAL-INDUSTRIAL TRADE OFF

During the long boom following World War II, Australian capitalism developed by expanding its industrial base and relying less on rural production. This industrial expansion took place behind high tariff barriers which, far from being a temporary shelter, have become an indispensable prop for most of the new industries.

While rural industries have been efficient by world standards, allowing Australian exports to compete on world markets, industrial capital, paying relatively high wages and selling on a small local market, has remained uncompetitive.

The tariff has distorted price levels and so maintained industry's profitability - but at the expense of rural capital.

This transfer to industry of surplus value produced in the rural sector has caused a strain between rural and industrial capital. But this strain has not led to open division for three reasons.

First, because much of the transfer was invisible. Australian rural export industries were so profitable by world standards for most of the period that there was enough to go round.

A political alliance was formed that allowed rural interests disproportionate influence. In the Liberal-Country Party coalition that held office from 1949 to 1972 Country Party ministers always held key economic portfolios, including the Treasury. From 1958 when he became leader of the Country Party and Minister for Trade, John McEwen dominated the government's economic policy making.

This doesn't mean the rural sector's economic interests were safeguarded - in fact the opposite. The form of this political alliance was consolation for rural support of a struggling industrial development program.

And of course rural subsidies were handed round as well. While these still didn't fully counteract the effect of the tariff they were more apparent. So the coalition and in particular the Country Party retained political support from those rural interests who felt they had special access to government.

This Menzies-McEwen solution to the problem of reconciling the interests of industrial and rural capital was an outstanding success for the capitalist class as a whole. Despite a very slow growth rate, heavy reliance on foreign capital and a series of economic and political crises that threatened to shatter the coalition (2) it held together until 1972.

But then it floundered. Why?

THE END OF A DREAM

One answer was that the coalition form of government was unable to resolve the contradictions between the different fractions of capital precisely because these interests were being directly articulated at the political level.

For the state to express and represent the general political interest of the capitalist class as a whole it must maintain a relative autonomy with respect to particular classes and fractions.

This doesn't mean it's in any sense independent of these classes and fractions or even that it has to appear independent for ideological reasons. It's simply that in fawning upon particular interests it loses its ability to express the interests of the class as a whole.

This was the crisis of the McMahon government.

By the 1970s Australian capitalism desperately needed restructuring. During the long boom capital accumulation in Australia had been slower than in comparable countries. The boom was ending and still Australia lagged behind. To be competitive, Australian capital had to improve its profitability and this meant being much more selective in the industries that were encouraged.
ECONOMIC NOTES

Unprofitable industries had to be abandoned and capital and labor directed to those that could compete on a world market. Of course, there could be no return to an economy based on rural exports but there could be a shift in resources to another efficient exporter: minerals.

THE WHITLAM STRATEGY

The strategy of the Whitlam government brought to office in 1972 was one based on restructuring Australian capitalism along these lines. Precisely because of the Labor Party's structure it could distance itself from the direct pressure of those sectors that would be hurt in the short term. It carried through policies like revaluation of the dollar and tariff cuts that served the overall interests of capital, but that the McMahon government could never implement.

This doesn't mean that the Labor Party served as a conduit for articulating the immediate interests of capital in the mineral sector.

On the contrary, Labor's strategy for economy-wide restructuring and increased investment in mineral development and processing rested on reversing two trends that had emerged in the minerals sector: the dominance of foreign capital and the fact that little processing was done, and that most of Australia's mineral wealth was being exported in untreated or only partially treated form.

Thus, the new Labor government came up against existing capital in the mineral sector. This fraction wasn't going to wait around for restructuring of the Australian economy and for Australian capital to be made available for development projects. It was only interested in short term profits and in getting raw materials out of Australia and into its parent processing plants overseas.

Hence the battle between Connor and the mining multinationals.

Mineral capital won this struggle, playing a key role in the political crisis of November 1975. In the process it strengthened its links with Country Party politicians to create an alliance at the political level between the traditional rural and the new mineral sector.

A NEW ALLIANCE ....

This convergence of the interests of rural and mineral capital to the extent that both could operate within a tight-knit political party like the Country Party rests on a similar relation both have to industrial capital.

Both are exporters. Both recognise that if manufacturing industry in Australia is to develop, price and wage levels will be maintained that will ensure a flow of surplus value away from them and towards less efficient industrial capital. Thus, it's in their interests to bloc together to force policies like devaluation of the $A and to fight for tariff reform and so stem this flow.

For the Country Party itself, this has meant a new lease of life. As long as it can still mobilise political support outside the cities for its policies it can present the new mineral sector with a ready-made constituency.

As the economic significance of rural capital declines, its traditional political representatives will play a crucial role in mediating the interests of industrial and mineral capital.

Mineral capital cannot play this political role directly, being largely foreign based and having a small workforce which it is very unlikely to be able to mobilise to express its interests. (3)

There will be contradictions, of course. For instance, Anthony's advocacy of higher prices for Australian crude oil must make some of his rural supporters think again, since the Country Party has previously attacked policies that increase farmers' costs.

So far, however, the new alliance has held together and under the Fraser government has taken a more powerful form. Not only does the Country Party have increased weight in cabinet - 6 ministers out of 25 as compared with 7 out of 34 under McMahon - but it has 'captured' part of the Liberal Party.

The Liberals have always had to represent more diverse sectors of Australian capital and have had to seek electoral support from other classes, including the urban working
class. This difficult role meant the party has often been deeply divided, as the trail of bodies Fraser climbed over to the leadership testifies. And within the Liberal Party are some - including Fraser himself - who are prepared to ally with the Country Party's championing of the rural/mineral axis rather than fight for the particular interests of industrial capital.

The Country Party won only 11 per cent of the vote in December 1975 but has 18 per cent of the seats in the House of Representatives and a quarter of the ministry and the cabinet.

However, even this picture understates its political importance; a full analysis must take account of the 'Country Party in exile' within the Liberal Party.

.... WITH PROBLEMS

So far we have assumed that the emergence of the Country Party as political representative of the mineral sector is compatible with its existing role, or at most requires only minor adjustments at the level of particular issues, like the oil price dispute.

However, a recent analysis by Dr. R.G. Gregory, published in The Australian Journal of Agricultural Economics casts doubts on this compatibility of interests. Although he doesn't draw political conclusions his argument does imply effects at the political level.

Gregory argues that the rapid growth in Australian mineral exports, through its effect on the balance of payments, has been a significant force for structural change in other sectors.

In particular, the rural sector that exports and the manufacturing sector that competes with imports have both suffered.

While the push to devalue the $A came from an alliance of these three sectors, Dr. Gregory has shown that their interests are not normally parallel and are often directly opposed.

Thus “the development of a new and rapidly growing export sector will affect the import competing sector in much the same way as a tariff reduction (that is, adversely) and affect the traditional export sector in much the same way as a tariff increase (also adversely).” (4)

He goes on, “it is estimated that the effect of the rapid growth of mineral exports on the rural exporting industries is approximately equal to the effect, in the absence of mineral exports, of a doubling of the tariff level.”

“For the import competing sector the effect of the mineral discoveries is estimated to be approximately equal to setting the average tariff at zero and introducing an import subsidy.”

Obviously, these are very large effects which, if produced through policy decisions at government level, would create a political crisis.

Dr. Gregory concludes, “a significant proportion of the difficulties now experienced by export and import competing industries which are arising from changes in the Australian cost level relative to that of our overseas trading partners - both through exchange rate changes and relative inflation rates - might be explained by the rapid growth of mineral exports over the last decade.”

The mechanism Dr. Gregory points to is simple. Assume the long term balance of trade is roughly in equilibrium. A sudden increase in exports from a new sector like minerals will lead to a balance of payments surplus and thus either to domestic inflation or to pressure for Australia to revalue. Either way, the prices of local goods measured in $A rises. Exporters face a harder battle on the world market while local manufacturers face a flood of imports made cheaper by the change in the $A’s value.

Any policy designed to cushion this effect in one of the three sectors must hit the other two, as Dr. Gregory shows. And the effects are large. In particular, the emergence of mineral exports has dwarfed the 25 per cent tariff cut introduced by Labor in 1973, according to his numerical analysis.

Dr. Gregory’s model leaves out factors that will become important at the political level. For example, foreign capital flows are ignored and imports assumed to equal exports, even though Australia has often had an export deficit and made up for this by importing foreign capital.

Also, as he himself points out, the model assumes everything reacts instantaneously but, in practice, there are lags.
The analogy between the emergence of a new export sector and changes in the tariff is thus not exact: the former "operates only after a sufficient period has elapsed to require either an exchange rate or to provide for a change in the relative rates of inflation between Australia and her major trading partners."

"From the viewpoint of the rural sector, however, the major effects of a tariff change and mineral exports operate through the same mechanisms, the exchange rate or inflation rate, and the time profiles of each may not be very different."

**A MORE DEMANDING MASTER**

Ruling political parties under capitalism have to subsume the economic interests of different fractions of capital; that's one of their functions. While the Liberal Party has done this reasonably successfully, the Country Party has not had to: both because of its special representative role and because much of this mediation took place between the coalition partners.

Now mineral capital will put special, unfamiliar demands on the Country Party.

For a start, capital in this sector, which is largely directed from overseas and dominated by the rhythm of capital accumulation on a world scale, is unlikely to be prepared to exchange some of its profits for political clout in Australia. Its attitude to political power is more direct and mercenary.

Also the divergence in economic interests between rural and mineral capital we have pointed to must make the Country Party's task more difficult and force a restructuring in the way it expresses these interests.

Of course, political parties change in response to demands like this; if they don't they are discarded. When Paul Keating, Labor shadow minister for minerals and energy, blamed Country Party ministers for their "failure" in extracting commitments from Japan in the minerals area at the recent Australia-Japan ministerial talks, he was making this sort of a threat.

Nixon and Sinclair had chased only minor agricultural concessions and allowed the Japanese once again to reassert their bargaining dominance in the mineral resources area, he said.

"The ministerial delegation", he said, "should have returned to Australia with a firm commitment to the new iron ore project for Western Australia and an assurance that coal exports to Japan would this year be in accordance with the 1975 Inayama agreement.

"Instead Mr. Nixon has received no assurances on the iron ore project and has failed to secure from the Japanese steel mills a commitment that coking coal tonnages be maintained at contract levels."

Mr. Keating may feel he could better express the interests of the mineral sector of Australian capital; it's not clear that many of these capitalists agree with him yet. But it is clear that the conservative political parties face difficulties in mediating the interests of conflicting sectors of capital and if they fail the capitalist class could again be forced to abandon its traditional representatives as it did in 1972, and risk the Labor option.

T.O'S. 1-2-77.

**FOOTNOTES**

1. Useful concepts to analyse divisions within the capitalist class are outlined in Nicolas Poulantzas, Classes in Contemporary Capitalism, especially pp. 91-189.

2. There were major cabinet divisions in 1962, 1967 and 1971. In 1962, McEwen forced the unprecedented resignation of a Liberal cabinet minister, Leslie Bury, following Bury's comments on the effect on Australia of Britain's entry into the European Common Market. When Britain devalued in 1967, the Country Party wanted Australia to follow - when it didn't the row was bitter. And in late 1971, Country Party members threatened to walk out of the coalition to prevent the Australian dollar being revalued.

3. Compare the way the Country Party mobilises political support. As Davies wrote in 1971, "The Country Party has recently averaged 14 per cent of the vote in federal elections; farmers themselves make up 8 per cent of workforce", Australian Democracy, p. 136. And Emy observed, "the Country Party has been able to retain the support of two out of three farm laborers", The Politics of Australian Democracy, p. 366.

Australia is no exception to the trend, throughout the capitalist world, of greater social conflict and upheaval leading to growing difficulties for those with power to be able to hold that power and rule in the 'normal' manner.

This is shown by the experience of mass opposition to conscription and Australia's involvement in the Indo-Chinese war in the late '60s and early '70s; the massive industrial stoppages in 1969 against the penal provisions of the Arbitration Acts, the sharp uplift of strike action from 1970 on; the gradually increasing industrial action on social/political issues; the national demonstrative actions against the South African Rugby tour.

Such events have made politics and social control a whole new ball game. No longer can political issues be channelled through the normal bipartisan political processes; the appeal of extra-parliamentary action has, to many, been proven a better substitute.

The double dissolutions in 1974 and 1975 makes it more difficult to identify what's 'normal' now and virtually impossible to predict what it will be in the future.

Because of the tendency towards instability and the potential for increasing difficulties in ruling in a 'normal' manner, the dominant social class and their administrators follow another world-wide trend, that of rule by decree, by emergency powers. So we need to look at, and
understand, what emergency powers are, what they are used for and attitudes to be taken towards them.

THE STATE

While there may be arguments that laws exist in all societies (1) I think it is indisputable that emergency powers are unique to societies administered by a state. One of the prerequisites of being able to introduce and apply emergency powers is that state power exists in a form capable of enforcing these powers. No one would seriously argue that emergency powers existed in an Australian Aboriginal society, among the Kung bushmen of Africa or the Kiukuru Indians of the Amazon. It is the crystallisation of executive power which determines the difference between these kinds of communal societies and our own. (2)

What is it about a society with a state that makes emergency powers unique to them? The state, as Engels (3) pointed out, expresses a special or particular stage of human development. He went on to say: "It is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has split into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel." (4)

This irreconcilable antagonism is a conflict between classes. The state only emerges when classes have been formed; there has never been a state in a classless society. Because the state arose out of class conflict it has been referred to as "an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another." (5)

But the state is not seen by the majority of people as an instrument of class rule or a mechanism for oppression of a particular class; if it were the difficulties for the ruling class would be multiplied still further, with the likelihood that their rule would come to an abrupt and probably bloody end. No, the class for whose interests the state acts seeks to project the state as "a power seemingly standing above society", (6) so it can act as an alleviator of social conflicts.

In general, the ruling class (in Australia the capitalist class) wields the apparatus of the state in such a way that its activities have the consensus of the vast majority of the people. Nevertheless, the state is founded on force and violence. At the centre of any state machine is "its army and police, its courts and jails". (7) The state grows around these instrumentalities of force; there has never been a state which first built an administrative machine and later added these forces of coercion. The state is the manifestation of class conflict and it would be ludicrous to conceive of the state as being based on anything other than a force capable of protecting the ruling class from their class foe, and enforcing compliance with its dictates.

Private ownership of land and other natural resources was the objective proof that classes existed and as Marvin Harris notes, this required the "payment of rent which was always a source of animosity and is unthinkable in the absence of an ultimate police or military backing." (8) Private ownership of surplus products, the means to produce those products, land and natural resources acted as a compulsion to have the physical means of guarding them from the natural inclinations of the have-nots.

The state then grows out of class conflict, is a mechanism for rule and subjugation of a class, but is presented as a neutral mediator of society’s disputes, conflicts and irreconcilable antagonisms.

EMERGENCY POWERS

There is hardly a developed capitalist country where the people have not experienced, in the last 15 years, the use of some form of emergency power. Those who were aghast and vocal in their condemnation of leaders of developing countries who introduced emergency powers are today defending the need for, and formulating their own, emergency powers. Bjelke-Petersen is a good example. He has been one of the most vocal in attacking other countries for what he calls totalitarianism, but himself has been a member of a government (once as its premier) which has twice, in the last decade, declared a state of emergency. West Australian Premier, Charles Court, and ex-NSW premier Bob Askin could be regarded as being cast in a similar mould.

Emergency powers are usually though not always (Northern Ireland has been under emergency powers since 1922 and South
Africa since the middle 1950s (9) introduced as short-term methods of rule.

No government can rule solely by emergency means without alienating an ever-growing section of its people. “Deception” is a more effective means of ruling (10) A piece of power used is a piece of power lost, and when you run out of power your time as a ruler runs out. This seems to have some validity in both Northern Ireland and South Africa.

If there is such a thing as normal rule, it is generally conceived of as encompassing human rights - such as no arrest or detention without trial; the right to legal representation; the right to freedom of speech, association, movement; access to information, etc. In reality, even in ‘normal’ periods of rule, these rights are a scarce commodity, competing against the growing needs of people. But we can say that we have, and expect more, individual freedoms and rights than if a state of emergency is declared. In normal rule, the use of punitive force is not expected; neither is it apparent. In fact, when we do see ‘official’ violence by some force of the state, such as the police, we usually strongly object. Normal rule is a rule of consensus. The term ‘rule of law’ expresses the fact that the overwhelming majority of people identify with and accept as correct the laws governing their society.

Sometimes, with little warning, the normal rule of law is dispensed with and emergency powers invoked. Whatever the reason, it is certain that the proclamation of emergency powers is caused by class conflict. The central issue is that of control - class control. In cases of natural disaster it may seem that declaration of an emergency has a non-class character. But that is not so. Because of the bourgeois values that prevail, the first priority is to protect property, then there is the need to compel people to do what they generally would not do, such as placing others’ interests ahead of their own. This is done by fixing prices on food, clothing and water; the compulsory acquisition of equipment and supplies; the power to compel one to give a hand if necessary.

Finally, there is an important symbolic necessity: the benevolent capitalist state coming to the rescue, showing workers that in times of greatest crisis they can’t get by without someone organised and capable of organising others. This paternalistic aspect was played out to the full in the Darwin disaster. An ex-Brigadier-General was presented by the media as the real savior and hero of the tragedy. Few stopped to consider the implications of the sweeping emergency powers he was given. Apart from being used as justification for the existence of emergency powers, natural disasters act as an opportunity to test those powers in preparation for a disaster which could face the ruling class in the future.

If we want to find the particular reasons for the proclamation of emergency, we should first look to the economic and political situation. In Northern Ireland, we are told, the main factors are religious, but when looked at more closely it can be seen that British economic, political and military strategic interests are involved and that the so-called Catholic side provides most of the cheap productive labor. Could it be that they are rebelling more against these things than against Protestant religious domination?

In Sth. Africa the emergency powers are supposed to be there to protect the country against outside subversion. But looking at the internal economic and political situation we can see that 16 to 17 million blacks provide enormous wealth and prosperity for 3½ million whites; that granting human rights, dignity and equality to the blacks would herald the end of white privilege. In Tanzania, the state of emergency was declared to stop cattle thieving which was disrupting the economic and political development of this newly emergent nation. (11)

In a state of emergency one can say the ‘rule of law’ gives way to the naked rule of class power and woe betide those who try to block the use of that power. Effective immediate power is exercised, not by the multitude of government instrumentalities but by those exceptional arms of the state; the police and the military. It can be more clearly seen in conditions of a state of emergency that “the shabbiest police servant .... has more ‘authority’ than all the organs of gentle society put together.” (13)

While this naked class power is unleashed fairly frequently nowadays, it would be quite wrong to think its power is unlimited. It still
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has to take account of the ideological and economic conditions in which it operates. Ideology, economics, traditions and conventions are all influences that act as partial constraints. No single aspect is sufficient by itself to act as a constraint. The restraint has to be perceived in a totality of all those things acting and reacting together. So, on November 11 last year, one convention was broken when Whitlam was dismissed, but other traditions and conventions acted as a restraint, allowing, for example, on that occasion, bourgeois elections to take place.

The political leaders administering, and the police and military applying, emergency powers are just as much conditioned by the prevailing ideology (usually more so), and would be unable to act independently of that conditioning. Another factor that can also act as a form of restraint is the proclaimed purpose of an emergency to restore control. The more ruthless its methods, the more primitive its means; the more opposition it generates, the longer it will be restoring control. In Northern Ireland, for example, there is: “... fairly solid evidence that internment has not merely redoubled IRA determination to employ violence but also increased recruits and broadened their support.” (13)

The name of the game is class survival and rule, and the best guarantee of both is by the consensus of their class opponents. The longer the period of emergency rule the more difficult the road to normality. The fear of opening Pandora's box becomes overpowering - until the inevitable happens and a social explosion opens it for them.

Emergency powers have one thing in common everywhere; they are based on violence and impending violence. They dispense with legal norms and, in effect, create their own ‘legality’ - the only guaranteed rights belong to those wielding power. Mathews notes that: “On paper there is little to choose between the detention laws of Northern Ireland and South Africa,” and that these powers have: “become an instrument of rule which the authorities are resorting to with growing frequency.”

He refers to the situation as “judicially uncontrolled”. (14) The exigencies of emergency power usually ensure that the police (and where used, the Army) become more physical in their coercion. The mass of the population are not only given to understand that, if necessary, physical force on a wide scale will be used, but they know such force will be unleashed should the situation warrant it. Punitive power is used with impunity.

To summarise this section, emergency powers are but a sharper expression of the class conflict. They arise when there is a threat to control by the ruling class and occur when normal methods of rule are thought to be ineffective in ensuring class domination. It shows that “Force exists to compel acceptance of capitalism if deception .... should fail.” (15)

THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

The character of the ruling class in Australia is no different in essentials from the capitalist class of America, Britain, France and so on.

In Australia emergency powers exist and have been used on numerous occasions. Five of the six States currently have on their statute books emergency powers legislation. They are the Emergency Powers Act of 1941 (SA); State Transport Act, 1938-43 (Qld.); Public Safety Preservation Act, 1958 (Vic.); Fuel, Energy and Power Resources Act Amendment Act 1974 (WA); the State Emergency Services and Civil Defence Act 1972 (NSW). (16). There is also the NSW Energy Authority Act, 1976.

There are a number of things which should be noted about these Acts. Firstly, the title of three of them obscure the fact that they are emergency powers under which a state of emergency can be invoked. All have been promulgated since the social turmoil and experiences of the Depression. The periods around the Second World War and the Vietnam war can be identified with four of the Acts and the NSW and WA Acts have been assented to during the current economic downturn in the capitalist world. In other words, all these Acts can be identified with periods of depression and upheaval. An intent of all the Acts is to be free of judicial restraints and controls: “... this Act shall be published in the Gazette, and thereupon .... shall be judicially noticed, and shall not be questioned in any proceedings whatsoever.”
(17) and: "no action shall lie and no proceedings of any kind shall be instituted or heard in any courts in respect of any act or decision of the Minister or any person or body authorised by him in the exercise or purported exercise of his powers under this part of the Act." (18)

What we really have here is a rather kind way of saying that all judicial, legal and political rights will be suspended forthwith.

These two examples also show the tenuous nature of bourgeois rights; that when bourgeois law is a hindrance, our virtuous 'law-abiding' leaders have no compunction about 'breaking' the laws which they appeal to others to abide by. History shows the call for 'law and order' is the catchphrase of a tyrant. The abovementioned clauses are so obviously unconstitutional (Australian) (19) that little more needs to be said except that they still exist on the statute books.

The class nature of these Acts is self-explanatory. The NSW Act states the provisions shall apply to plagues or epidemics, etc. and "to an attack directed against the State or any part of the State". (20) In the Queensland Act, whether the cause be fire, flood or Acts of God, etc. "or by reason of any other cause or circumstance whatever whereby the peace, welfare, order, good government, .... of the State" (21) are threatened.

As the States have no defence powers under the Constitution, their reference to an "attack directed against the state" must be an internal one, and that is hardly likely to mean an attack by the ruling class on their own state mechanism for oppression. Likewise, "any other cause or circumstance" whereby the "peace" and "order" or "good government" are affected can only mean that the act is directed at the working class. Since when did the capitalist class admit to being responsible for war, disorder and bad government? They are things of which only labor and workers' governments and trade unions are capable.

Whether it is believed the emergency act is directed at the working class and other opponents of capitalism, the fact remains that, in Queensland, the Act has been used only against them, and them alone. The emergency powers in 1965 were not used to force Mount Isa Mining Co. to open their gates for work or to negotiate with or grant the miners their demands, but against the miners who were on strike. And in 1971 the powers vested in the Queensland Act were not used against racists but against their opponents. Queensland must have the rather dubious distinction of being the only government in the world to proclaim a state of emergency "for the purpose of conducting thereupon a Rugby Union football match". (22) While it may sound funny, it is really extremely serious because it is a sad testament to, and reflection of, the paucity of that government and the threat it poses to democratic and legal rights.

I don't want to go into the specific class factors which acted as causes for the dismissal of the Labor government, but want to make one exception and state that the reason for the government's dismissal had little or nothing to do with the state of the economy. The fact is that the state of the economy is no better now than 12 months ago and is probably worse. Suffice it to say the issues were of a much deeper nature than the current rate of inflation, the number of unemployed or the size of the budget deficit. The "reprehensible circumstances" had to include matters such as political, economic and military strategies that threatened the ruling class's social control of the working class, otherwise the exercise was illogical and did not make sense.

However, what I do intend to do is show the class nature of the powers used to dismiss the Labor Government and to concentrate at some length on the performance of the Governor-General in the events of November 1975.

At a commonwealth level it is a little uncertain how much legislative emergency powers the Parliament has, though the courts acknowledge that in time of war, its defence powers are extensive enough to allow it to declare a state of emergency. (23) Two things seem to need to be said. If the situation warranted it then, whether the Constitution gave the Commonwealth powers for declaring an emergency would be irrelevant; an emergency would be declared. Even in normal times when it comes to the grey zones of Commonwealth sovereignty, the Commonwealth has always assumed that it has the power and waited for the States to challenge and prove otherwise.
Secondly, under the Constitution the powers vested in the Governor-General in a sense could be claimed to be Commonwealth power and used if necessary with the approval of Parliament. Therefore I intend to concentrate my attention on the Governor-General's executive powers.

COMMONWEALTH POWERS

Australia is somewhat different from most other capitalist countries in that its Constitution makes provision for a representative of the British monarchy to wield certain powers. These powers are often referred to, misleadingly, as 'reserve powers'. Misleading because they do not designate the true nature of these powers. The 'reserve powers' of the Governor-General are the accumulation of enormous emergency class power. "Less well known is the power of the Crown to establish a state of martial law in times of insurrection or rebellion."(24)

Section 61 of the Constitution states: "Executive power of the Commonwealth is vested in the Queen and is exercisable by the Governor-General as the Queen's representative, and extends to the execution and maintenance of this Constitution and of the laws of the Commonwealth." And section 1, ch. 1 states that legislative power of the Commonwealth resides with Parliament consisting of the "Queen, a Senate and House of Representatives". S 57 gives the power to the Governor-General to dissolve Parliament. S 5 and S 28 give him additional powers over the dissolution and sitting of Parliament, with S 52 giving power to the government to make laws "for the peace, order and good government".

Put together, all of these sections suggest that the range of emergency powers is extremely extensive, even if somewhat imprecise or uncertain. In effect the Governor-General could "be the autonomous ruler of the country for some time, provided of course that he had others to carry out his orders."(25)

Prior to 1975 such propositions would have been considered ridiculous, impossible and the figments of an overactive imagination. However, today, nothing in terms of the possible extent of the Governor-General's powers can be overlooked and dispensed with as being impossible. That which was unthinkable is today's reality. Professor Howard clearly shows that the dissolving of Parliament in November 1975 did not take place in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. S 57 could not "apply ... because there is never time for the complex procedures of that section to be complied with before the money runs out."(26) Which poses the question, under which section of the Constitution was Parliament dissolved?

As for needing people to back his actions up, S 68 of the Constitution makes the Governor-General "the Commander-in-Chief of the Naval and Military" ... forces and one could add the Commonwealth Police under S 61. With that array of force at his disposal it is doubtful that many, if any, would refuse to carry out his orders. The point which should be grasped is that after it happens it is too late. One then is going to have to bear with the pain of the consequences. If there is an ounce of truth in the Leader of the Opposition's claim that the Governor-General has "notions of grandeur" can we afford to take the risk?

How the Governor-General came to be vested with such powers is very much a class question and mirrors the real intention of those "reserve" powers. The Australian Constitution has to be seen as a "compromise between the British Imperialists, the new central authority and the authority of the previous six separate colonies."(27)

So on the one hand we had the British colonialists, who had extensive interests in Australia, and on the other the newly emerging national bourgeoisie who wanted greater freedom to rule. England as a precautionary measure to protect its investments, demanded and got written into the Constitution that the armed forces of the new nation would remain under her ultimate command. "Constitutional law is not pure logic, it is logic plus politics."(28) The formulators of our Constitution were not guided by the principle of 'common interest' but by class interests. Those who question this proposition should ponder on these facts: the only governments to be dissolved by the reserve powers of the monarchy's representatives, have been labor (worker-oriented) governments and troops have been used only against the working class.

And for those who doubt that the military
would carry out the Governor-General’s orders - how many times in history have military commanders refused to carry out their superiors’ orders, and how many times in history has the military, in times of social conflict and rebellion, sided with the rebellious masses? Anyway, we have the answer straight from the horse’s mouth. A Major General Vickery, a senior officer of the Citizens Military Forces, is quoted as saying in respect to disturbances in Papua-New Guinea:

“Internal disorder of major proportions is a strong possibility. It could possibly happen by 1975 ... we must have a strong moral obligation to preserve its stability and integrity, if only by peace-keeping action. This is the strongest and most likely short term role for the Army in or outside Australia.”(29)

(My emphasis, M.T.)

Some may still think that all of this is drawing a long bow, is over-reacting, or fantasy, that it would not happen. Then once again they should reflect upon the fact that a defence report, reported publicly in the media in September 1975, dealing with the reorganisation and re-equipping of the military, proposed the formation of two new battalions as the only increase in the numerical size of the army. These two new battalions were to be highly mobile “paramilitary” units. Paramilitary units have one purpose and one purpose only - civilian control, rule and administration. They are for rule and government by the military.

It was also reported by some of the media that after the dismissal of the Labor Government in November, all police and army leave was cancelled. “The plain fact is that at the point where political tactics and constitutional law interact, the rules of Australian national government have changed,”(30) and like it or not that means the Governor-General’s powers are now practically speaking (no longer theoretically) greater than they have ever been. “The precedent has been set and accepted by all parties involved in the action.”(31) (My emphasis, M.T.) Not only by the political parties but also by the Chief Justice and the newly appointed High Court Judge, Mr Justice Aitkin. As reported in a press statement issued by the acting Attorney-General, Senator Greenwood, on November 20, 1975, he had tendered a legal opinion to the Liberal National Country Parties on October 23 1975, that the Governor-General had the power to act as he did.(32)

The shabbiest aspect of the implementation of the reserve powers of the Governor-General in November and what seems to have amounted to a deliberate, calculated manoeuvre to give his actions the imprimatur of legality, was the summoning of the Chief Justice for advice. The Constitution explicitly establishes and separates the High Court from the Executive and the Legislature and if there was any body of people he could not seek advice from it was High Court judges. For the simple reason is that, as has already been held in the Cormack v. Cope case (33), those persons may have to adjudicate on the validity of the Governor-General’s actions.

Thus a judge giving prior advice to a party, the substance of which, at a future date could be involved in an action before him/her could compromise their position and possibly pervert the course of justice. S 71 of the Constitution makes it doubtful whether the High Court can validly sit on constitutional questions without the Chief Justice. Prior to November 11, 1975 the Governor-General supported the principle of judicial independence and in fact made it a distinction between bourgeois law and socialist law when he stated:

“Western society is characterised by the Rule of Law as a most important distinguishing feature between it and the Communist world. The latter being founded upon dictatorship, authoritarianism and .... tyranny ....”

He then goes on to state:

“... the lesson to be learned from what has been said is that the Rule of Law means little unless in the first place all can enforce their rights and be protected in their life, liberty, property and reputation .... For these purposes .... the law depends substantially upon the existence of a strong and independent legal profession ....”

(My emphasis M.T.)

The Governor-General would, I suggest, also have been aware of what the framers of
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the Constitution intended to be the powers of that office. Two of them stated that the power of the Governor-General “can only be exercised according to the will of the people”, (36) and that it is exercised “according to the advice of Ministers who have the confidence of Parliament”. (37)

But the real class allegiance and bias of the Governor-General comes straight from his own mouth when he states “the real line of progress is to provide the poor with what the rich have, not to take it away from the rich”. (38) Such a proposition is a rather glib and sophisticated way of saying, “leave things as they are”, because not even he tried to explain how that could happen, and neither could be. To expect a Governor-General with these views to act in the interest of the poorer class is too much. I further suggest that the Governor-General was well aware of the following from the Chief Justice:

“In the first place it is not given to the Governor-General to decide whether or not in fact the occasion for the exercise of the power of double dissolution has arisen. In my opinion only this Court may decide that fact. But of course, the Governor-General must make up his own mind .... but what he determines for himself is in no wise binding.”

(My emphasis - M.T.)

This quote also brings into question the Chief Justice’s own honesty when he claimed at a press conference on June 10, 1976, that he gave advice to the Governor-General because the kind of action he had decided on could not come before the court. That was untrue. Precisely the actions he said could not come before the High Court had previously been before the Court in the Cormack v. Cope case, and he was the Chief Justice who sat on that case.

I surmise that the class interests were such that, irrespective of previous rulings or conventions, they went ahead. The validity of this opinion is substantiated by the fact that almost all the capitalist daily papers in Australia supported the Governor-General’s actions. Those who may be tempted to think the press did so as a matter of moral righteousness should go back and read these same press barons’ editorials on our involvement in the Vietnam war.

I have concentrated at some length on the events of 1975 because of their current importance and to show they had a class bias. Law students are being trained to believe in the ‘rule of law’, its importance in terms of order, peace, stability, life, liberty and social justice. Could it be that we have witnessed the highest office bearers of the bourgeois legal system, in protection of their class, wealth and privilege, coldly, dishonestly and without qualms, trampling over the laws they expect us - future jurists - to defend and uphold? And if we have, should we not follow the example they set for us? The point that Geoffrey Caine, and Professors Howard and Manning Clark (40) continuously overlook or obscure is the class nature of the reserve powers of the Governor-General. Their approach to November 11 is essentially a legalistic one. It cannot wholly be explained, fully understood, appreciated or the debate won by using purely bourgeois legal points. Every first year law student learns after the first tutorial that, for every legal point for one side, there is an alternative one for the other. So, no matter how eminent their opinions are, skilful exponents and masters at the legal game like the Governor-General and the Chief Justice will have an alternative one. About the only certainty of bourgeois law is that it works in the overall interests of the bourgeois class.

Emergency powers and ‘reserve’ powers of the Crown can better be fully understood and explained by using a marxist critique which identifies the classes involved. It is in the course of such a critique that the validity or otherwise of legal points is useful.

LIBERALISING EMERGENCY POWERS

Some try to argue for a more “civilised” set of emergency laws. Sean McBride considers that to meet the criterion of the Rule of Law measures employed during a state of emergency should not be excessive or extreme. (41) Liberal propositions like these fail to take account of the character of emergency powers, or the reasons necessitating their implementation. It is ludicrous to think that emergency powers legislation can be enacted which will guarantee judicial restrictions on their use. One of the purposes of emergency powers is to allow the authorities to act as the situation warrants from time to time without having to
be concerned or restrained by the cumbersome functioning of the judiciary or to abide by that institution’s restrictive rules of legal conduct.

It is because the judiciary recognises this fact, and the class character of these powers, that it has consistently refused to intervene. For example, in South Africa the court held with the 180 day detention rule “that the decision to detail need not be based on objectively established reasons and that the Attorney-General’s own opinion that valid reasons exist is decisive”. (42) In Northern Ireland the court held that “the internment power is clearly not subject to judicial control in the form of a habeas corpus application or otherwise”. (43)

Every conceivable rule is broken under emergency powers with the acquiescence of the judiciary. Reasonableness gives way to random arbitrariness when it comes to arrest and detention, with the judiciary blandly asserting “In this case there is no reference to the reasonableness, nor do I find anything in the words of the regulations which suggests that it should be imported into it”. (44)

An Australian example of the timorous nature of the judiciary when it comes to intervention against the arbitrary powers inherent in a state of emergency, is the following quote by Queensland’s Stables, J: “It is not for the court to question the validity of any opinion formed by His Excellency in Council under S 22. The Court is concerned with the question of legality and not with fact.” (45) The fact that this act was a public statement dismissing the learned Judge’s own court as irrelevant and a nuisance seems to have been completely lost on him, or was it?

There are good reasons, apart from those I have already mentioned, of why the courts have acted placidly in emergency situations. Not the least of these are that when the class conflict or potential conflict has reached the stage of open antagonism which necessitates the declaration of a state of emergency, it is too late for legalities. The learned judges of the bench understand that when the instruments of class force (the police or military) are unleashed, they stand naked and impotent. When emergency powers are unleashed it is the moment of truth for the judiciary. While the courts are based on force, it is a force not inherent in that situation, but external to it (though that is not to say that force is not inherent in the decisions of the courts). What the court has is an authority or privilege that grants it access to a certain amount of force. But when that force is withdrawn, the court stands exposed as a toothless, clawless tiger. In a state of emergency this is a fact the court must face no matter how distasteful.

Of crucial importance in the performance of the judiciary is the class composition of the bench itself. Lord Devlin states:

“Judges are, inevitably, part of the establishment and the establishment’s ways are those which are operating in our minds .... I think the law has to be part of the establishment.”

Fellow judge, Lord Hailsham, put the matter a little more succinctly when he said:

“There is no such thing as a value-free or neutral interpretation of the law .... judges, like everybody else, are influenced by the economic and political climate of their time, if they were not, they would be considered either revolutionary or reactionary, and they would become political judges .... judges must move with society.”

It is obvious from this that there is no earthly possibility of either judicially controlled emergency powers, or of judicial restraints being used against the use of emergency powers. The remarkably frank statements of the abovementioned judges make that abundantly clear. What Twining is really concerned about is not human rights. In fact he ridicules those who oppose the existence of emergency powers. He states his concern thus:

“Civil order obtained through intimidation rather than integration will ensure the continuing need for emergency powers. The objects of introducing emergency powers is rather to create a situation in which they are no longer required.”

What Twining seems to be after is the same game with a different name: the making of emergency powers respectable so that they have the approval of the class they are directed at, and intended to be used against. He is fearful that reaction to the extensive use of emergency powers could lead to social revolt and revolution. Thus his main concern
is for the survival of capitalism, not the human rights of the masses.

"It is a strange thing what authority the opinion of mankind generally grants to the intervention of courts. It clings even to the mere appearance of justice long after the substance has evaporated: it lends bodily form to the shadow of the law." (46)

However, once the courts lose this mystical hold over the masses, the 'rule of law' is seen for what it is: a class instrument for their subjugation, a mechanism which allows tyranny to reign. It is fear of exposure which motivates the likes of Twining to redraft emergency powers legislation.

Those who believe in human rights and the rights of people to determine the kind of government and social system they want should not attempt to formulate emergency powers. Instead, they would do better to direct their energies to explaining their class character, working for their abolition, and with it the disarming of the police and having them placed under some kind of community control. At least that would allow the adversaries in the social conflict to fight it out on more equal terms and would surely be less painful to all concerned. It should never be forgotten that for rebellion to take place a prerequisite is for the ruling class to have fouled up their own rule, so why should they be protected?

In conclusion, the state is a mechanism for class subjugation; it grows out of class conflict and antagonism. Emergency powers are precisely that. They are the powers the ruling class wield in a crisis when its power, control and hegemony are threatened; when nothing, not even its own law is sacred. Emergency powers thus mirror the class conflict which exists in any society which has a state. Legal constraints on the use of emergency powers are impossible and their liberalisation not feasible. The very fact of their implementation is an admission that the 'normal' rule of law has failed. Events over the last few decades show that this analysis is as much applicable in Australia as anywhere else. Classes, the state, and emergency powers are inter-related. By abolishing classes the way is open to abolition of the state and with it emergency powers. Until that happens, be prepared and be warned: it will happen again. Probably the next time Labor wins an election they will only win the House of Representatives and thus return to a pre-November 11, 1975 position - the very situation which facilitated the invoking of emergency powers.

One other lesson can be learned from an historical study of the use of emergency powers: do not rely on the judiciary for protection. They are not on the side of the citizens but on the side of those unleashing arbitrary terror.

The real problem flowing from the events of November 11 and the real threat is that it makes it more likely that Australians will find themselves in a situation where they are ruled by decree. The safety valve for capitalism - short periods of reform under social democratic government - has all but been replaced by perpetual domination by a conservative senate. The probable solution to this quandary is open class confrontation and conflict. That is why the nature and character of emergency powers need to be exposed.

FOOTNOTES
1. Moore, Stanley, "Marxism Theories of Law in Primitive Society", in S. Diamond, Culture and History.
4. ibid.
19. The wide sweeping nature of these clauses quite obviously preclude the right of people to be heard by the highest court of appeal in Australia - the High Court of Australia and thus contravene s73, 75, 77 and 78. Secondly the power vested in the Commonwealth under s51 of the Constitution would make it impossible for any state to declare a state of emergency without infringing on Commonwealth jurisdiction. It seems that it is very doubtful that any state can validly promulgate emergency powers without the agreement of the Commonwealth.
21. State Transport Act (Qld) 1938-43, s22.
22. Proclamation Extraordinary, 14th July 1971, Queensland Govt. Gazette, Section 1.
25. Ibid, p. 35.
29. Melbourne Sun, 15.9.73, also E.F. Hill, op.cit., p. 30.
31. Ibid., p. 18.
32. The Australian 27.9.76.
33. (1974)No. 3 ALR.
35. Ibid, p. 79.
37. Ibid, p. 685, also Howard, op.cit.
40. Sydney Morning Herald, Oct 9, 1976, an article by Margaret Jones on Professor Clark's views on the effects of November 11, 1975.
43. R (O'Hanlon) v. Governor of Belfast Prison, 56 (1922) ILTR 170.

Private Vices, Public Virtues. Miklos Jancso's latest film, is such a feast for the senses - vibrant music, rich coloring, warm, frank sensuality - that it comes as something of a shock to realise how tame and even tedious the whole exercise is. You can manufacture a continuing low level of interest in it, of course, by spotting the Jancso trademarks - dialogue so sparse that it tempts you to dismiss the story line outright, visuals so lovingly dwelled upon that you break your brains trying to squeeze as much significance out of the scene as the director obviously does, ritual stripping, the humiliation motif, etc. But such high-art gamesmanship soon palls, and you are left with a somewhat dense, but basically centre-less film featuring small doses of inchoate politics and large doses of curiously sexless sex. Many of Jancso's earlier films, however elliptical in form, are recognisably "about" revolution or the forms of popular expression that make revolution an imaginative possibility. Round-Up, The Confrontation, The Red and the White, Red Psalm are concerned with the struggles of "the people" (peasants/students) against repressive forces, and with the collective activities which nourish revolutionary vision. It is
clear that Private Vices, Public Virtues marks a decided shift in focus.

In this film, instead of the mass and their collective actions, Jancso gives us a tiny fragment of the ruling class - admittedly a rebellious one - and their private attempts at personal transcendence. The narrative concerns the efforts by a Crown Prince of an unnamed European country (although it is obviously late 19th century Austria-Hungary) to resist the Establishment duties and responsibilities of his position and to oppose the hypocrisy and corruption rife in his father's authoritarian regime. The means chosen for these protests are sexual. The Crown Prince rejects the dominant values of "family, procreation and fatherland" by secluding himself in a rural retreat, refusing to fulfil either his husbandly or royal responsibilities in sleeping with the Crown Princess, immersing himself in sensuality - even debauchery - with willing maidservants, and mocking his father's name, position, and even image at every opportunity.

Joined by his half-brother and sister (both of whom are the Crown Prince's lovers and each other's), they resolve to destroy the old regime in the name of "truth", to expose its hypocrisy and corruption at a public trial in which they will be the defendants. They plan a sexual cause celebre so scandalous that the Emperor will be unable either to hush it up or ignore the critique of his regime implicit in their libertine practices and life-styles. He will be forced to arrest them, and the resulting trial will give them a public opportunity to confront and indict oppressive authority directly.

Their scheme is to demean their aristocratic contemporaries and to compromise this golden generation in a wanton orgy. Evidence will be obtained through photographs of the sensuality which lies under the mask of respectability. In the event, licence leads not only to abandoned sexual behavior but also to treason. The orgy's sexual freedom liberates the young aristocrats politically, and they are prepared not only to revile and defile the Emperor and his emissaries, but also to subversively declare the throne effectively vacant and the Crown Prince Emperor.

When the party is over, it becomes obvious that the conspirators, now joined by a beautiful hermaphrodite - yes, she has breasts and a penis - from a travelling "circus of truth" will not be allowed their public trial. Effectively prisoners in their idyllic surroundings, they await death at the unmerciful hands of State and Church, and engage in a final prolonged sequence of lyrically filmed polymorphous sex.

And it is here that the film loses all pretence to treating sensual life in a relational sense. Sexuality is no longer portrayed as a means to a political or personal end, but as an end in itself. Everything filmic supports this view: the caressing camerawork, the wordless athleticism of the acts of intercourse themselves, the fluid dimensionality of the music, all attest to Jancso's exploration of "pure" sensuality. Given even the sketchy social context of the preceding explicitly sexual scenes, this apparently unmotivated final passage appears decisively abstract, the eroticism ultimately reified. The total effect - despite beautiful bodies in beautiful embraces - is cerebral rather than emotional.

At the film's end, the four sensualists, sacrificially recumbent under a white cloth, are ritually executed. As the bodies are prepared for burial, we hear the "official" announcement of a royal suicide; the bodies lie in state, the revolt without strategy has been quashed and its historical existence denied.

The problem is how to relate Jancso's final extended sexual exegesis to its eventual defeat by the authoritarian forces. Does it represent something as uncomplicated as a final fling, a last submersion in the life of the senses before the executioner strikes? Or is its purpose to subject Jancso's audiences to a lesson in sensuality, to its didactic portrayal as non-threatening and expressive, rather than dominating and instrumental? Is it merely a somewhat overstated illustration of the means by which these four already atypical people have generated the courage to oppose the regime, and to die for their high-minded "cause" of truth? Or is it a statement as to the poverty of the Reichian solution, that sexuality alone provides neither tactics nor strategy for a real revolution against entrenched forces of repression.

In light of Jancso's other films, the last explanation would fit with his previously expressed preoccupations with the mechanisms of revolutionary vision. Unfortunately, the film itself gives too little justification for such a view. It would be a perverse stretching of the film to over-emphasise the anti-Reichian point. But if Private Vices isn't about the revolutionary possibilities inherent in sensual life, then you're stuck to know what the hell it is about. Clues are so sparse, guidance so absent, that you are left with the obvious: it is a film celebrating sex, from the Playboy camerawork in the orgy scenes (open bodices, garters, long stockings for the ladies) to the final sequences where the screen is totally absorbed and suffused in flesh tones. If there is a political motif, it comes either in a bourgeois, literary guise - allusions to Shakespeare's rebels (Hamlet, Prince Hal, Romeo and Juliet) abound - or in the form of absolutist symbolism: Life versus Death; Spirit versus Order; Sensuality versus The State. The result is, I fear, simply a formal film exercise by a director entranced with his own images and his own undoubted abilities to translate these images onto celluloid, who has simply run out of political steam.

- Kathe Boehringer.
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