

Australia Dossier by Robert Barwick

Southwest Pacific Blows Up

Australia is "going for the gold"—and not only at the Sydney Olympics.

Less than three weeks into the ongoing coup crisis in Fiji, the Pacific rim again erupted in violence, when a similar coup was staged against the government of the Solomon Islands, located to Fiji's northwest. On June 4, a militia group calling itself the Malaita Eagle Force, arrested Solomon Island's Prime Minister Bartholomew Ulufa'alu and its Governor-General, cut telephone lines from the island, closed the airport, and issued an ultimatum for the Prime Minister to resign.

The coup seemingly caught Australia flat-footed, as had also apparently happened in Fiji. This has provoked a sharp debate in Parliament and the media, about the "failure of Australia's foreign policy in the region." In reality, Australia has succeeded only too well, in carrying out *British* foreign policy in the Southwest Pacific, which mandates breaking up nation-states and seizing raw materials.

The Solomons coup was ostensibly triggered by tensions over competing land claims on the main island of Guadalcanal. The population of natives from the island of Malaita, brought to Guadalcanal as labor during World War II, had grown, and their increased occupation of land around the capital, Honiara, sometimes by squatting, had in recent years provoked a backlash by the native, "indigenous" Guadalcanalese. Eighteen months ago, violence had broken out between the militias representing the two groups, the Malaita Eagle Force, and the indigenous Istabu Freedom Movement. The conflict divided the Solomons' police force, and, with civil war brewing, Prime Minister Ulu-

fa'alu, himself a Malaitan, urgently requested armed police reinforcements from Australia and New Zealand.

Incredibly, this request was refused, despite warnings by former Fijian Prime Minister and Commonwealth mediator Sitiveni Rabuka, that a coup was clearly under way. "The situation in the Solomons was predicted for some time," Rabuka told *The Australian* on June 8. Rabuka's appointment by the Crown-controlled Commonwealth as a "mediator" in the Solomons was most curious, since he himself had led two "indigenous" coups in Fiji in 1987, and is deeply involved in the current one as well (see *EIR*, June 9).

Defending his government's decision to ignore the request for police, Australian Prime Minister John Howard said that such a deployment would place Australians in a position of "unacceptable risk." Moreover, "Australia can't be held responsible for everything that goes wrong in the region," he said. However, Howard was singing a different tune last year in East Timor, when he "sent in the Marines" to "preserve democracy," after having provoked the East Timor crisis in the first place, by demanding immediate elections.

Australia now faces an arc of crisis to its north, stretching from the Indonesian province of Aceh in the northwest, through the Indonesian provinces of Maluku, North Maluku, and West Papua (the former Irian Jaya); through Papua New Guinea, P.N.G.'s secessionist-wracked island-province of Bougainville; and on across the Solomons eastward to Fiji.

As documented in the Jan. 28,

2000 *EIR* report, "Queen Breaks Up Nation-States To Steal Raw Materials," this region holds some of the richest raw materials deposits on earth, including massive oil and natural gas reserves in Aceh, Timor, and P.N.G.; the world's richest gold and copper mine in Grasberg in West Papua; and two of the world's ten richest gold mines, and its fifth- and eighth-largest copper mines, in P.N.G. The Solomons is also home to Gold Ridge, a gold mine which accounts for more than 30% of the Solomons' Gross Domestic Product (just as the Grasberg gold mine in West Papua accounts for 30% of Indonesia's export income). With the crisis in the Solomons, the share price of Gold Ridge's owners, Delta Gold, has suddenly collapsed, making it a takeover target for the British-controlled world minerals cartel.

Australia's foreign policy, like its intelligence services, is directed by Her Majesty's Privy Council, the ruling body of the British Empire, now renamed the Commonwealth (see *EIR*, Jan. 20, 2000). That body's strategic perspective was outlined by Prince Philip's religious affairs adviser, Martin Palmer, in a discussion with an American journalist on Sept. 16, 1999: "We are seeing the final denouement of the processes unleashed in 1914," he exulted. "It is the break-up of huge empires. Russia is breaking up. . . . In Indonesia, East Timor is the fault line. If East Timor goes, then Aceh will go the same way, and then, what about the other islands? The fact is, *Indonesia has no logic for existence.*" Moreover, he said, "It is absolutely fundamental to British policy to encourage the break-up of empires. British policy, for the last 200 years, has been based on one central idea: the break-up of other empires. . . . Perfidious Albion is alive and well. . . . The British Foreign Office has a certain agenda, which is continued divide and rule."