

FOET (WA) News Sheet

August 1999

Coming events

♦ John Pilger film 'The Timor Conspiracy'

Saturday 14 August 6pm W.A. Premiere at the Alexander Library Theatre. Wine and Cheese at 5.30pm Bookings 9227 7367 \$12 and \$8 concession. Also showing 12 noon Sunday 15 August. Organized by ASIET and Fretilin.

♦ Rally at the CAUSEWAY bridge

Tuesday 17 August (Victoria Park end) 7am to 9am.

On August 17, 1949, Indonesia won its independence from Dutch rule. 50 years on, the people of East Timor are preparing to vote on whether they will be independent of Indonesia or have special autonomy status.

The right of the East Timorese people to determine their future continues to be seriously undermined by paramilitary groups opposed to East Timor gaining its independence. The continued violence and intimidation by these militias has resulted in an estimated 50,000 to 60,000 East Timorese having fled their homes.

The key issue for the rally is to urge the Australian government to take part in a United Nations Peace-Keeping Force as proposed by the United States government.

Time to get out the banner: "INDEPENDENCE FOR INDONESIA, INDEPENDENCE FOR EAST TIMOR!" Organized by FOET 9361 0373 and the Christian Centre for Social Action 9472 4227.

Petition

Thanks to everyone who helped with the petition. We counted 4,594 signatures from W.A. so far – a marvelous effort. Jann McFarlane, MHR for Stirling, has agreed to table the petition in Federal Parliament this week.

Do you need to return your petition?

If you have not yet sent in your petition, you may still do so up to August 26, as these can be added to those already tabled.

♦ Comedy benefit for East Timor

Sunday August 22 7pm to 10pm (doors open from 6pm) at MOJO'S 237 Queen Victoria St North Fremantle. A Great GIG to support East Timor!

NB. *African Music Congress* playing 9pm to 10pm.

Tickets at the door \$12 waged / \$10 concession

For more information contact the Friends of East Timor on 9361 0373.

♦ 24 Hour Vigil and Fast for the Ballot

28-29 August 5pm Saturday to 5pm Sunday. This is an occasion meant for all. Please come along to show solidarity with the East Timorese people. It is hoped that the Vigil will be held in the grounds of St Mary's Cathedral, but this is yet to be confirmed. Bring your sleeping bag if you would like to stay with us in the grounds. There will be various activities during the 24 hours - information sessions, cultural items, prayer groups, a possible phone hook-up with Bishop Belo in Dili. All events will focus on East Timor. This is a family event. All details to be confirmed: ring Cathy Taylor on 9361 0373, or the Christian Centre for Social Action on 9472 4227 to find out about the program.

Urgent! Urgent! Urgent! Observers for East Timor Referendum Needed

Can you help ?

The East Timorese are finally getting the chance to decide their future.

Armed militias may still disrupt the process. You can become an accredited volunteer observer.

For information on training programs during the next months contact **Christine Harris**

of **Friends of East Timor (WA)**

Email (preferred): charris100@hotmail.com

Phone: 93606124 (w/h) 93145508 (a/h)

John Pilger in Sydney

Cowards of Oz

**Taken from the Guardian Weekly Wednesday August 5th 1999*

In November, Australians will vote to keep the Queen as head of state, or become a republic. According to a poll last week, most appear not to give a damn. "There isn't enough energy in the republican issue," said the premier of Queensland, with an eloquence long associated with his office, "to change a light bulb."

The Australian establishment has always been happy with a veiled colonial status. The declaration of a federation in 1901, far from being a bold act of independence, was a desperate cry to Mother England to stay on and defend her most distant colony from the "Asiatic hordes".

These days, official fear of Asia is disguised by a language suitably tempered so as not to offend Asia's dictators and autocrats; for not offending them is the basis of a frequently bizarre policy of appeasement and collaboration.

The love affair with Suharto surpasses all others. In 1965-6 Suharto took power in Indonesia, in a blood-bath. Having monitored the slaughter of half a million people from a spy base near Darwin, the Australian government raised not a word of protest.

On the eve of Suharto's invasion of the Portuguese colony of East Timor in 1975 and the extermination of a third of the population, the regime tipped off the Australian ambassador, Richard Woolcott, who cabled Canberra that "we leave events to take their course . . . and act in a way designed to minimise the public impact in Australia".

The irony was searing. More than 40,000 East Timorese had died fighting to prevent a Japanese invasion of Australia. Paul Keating, the prime minister who loudly promoted Australian republicanism, never mentioned his country's debt.

Since the resignation of Suharto last year, the East Timorese have been told they can vote for autonomy or independence in a UN-sponsored referendum, the integrity of which is to be "guaranteed" by the very military that has been killing them for 23 years.

Keating's successor, John Howard, is selling out the East Timorese in secret. On March 4, he was given an intelligence report of Indonesia's planned violence in the run-up to the UN vote. He remained silent.

The tragedy is that East Timor is probably the only major foreign policy issue in which Australia has real influence. The long nightmare of the East Timorese might never have happened had governments in Canberra not given Suharto the green light. Claiming a proud new republic, while denying the right of life and freedom to a neighbour, is a craven charade.

Lobbying still needed !

Until the terror stops and the guns are withdrawn from East Timor, we need to keep up the political pressure by every means we can. Your presence at the various events is a wonderful expression of solidarity with the people of East Timor. Also essential are other actions such as visits and letters to your politicians.

FOET(WA) is now working with a coalition of organizations initiated by Amnesty International and

including, Community Aid Abroad, the Christian Centre for Social Action, some State and Federal members of Parliament, Catholic and Uniting Church groups, Trade Unions and members the East Timorese community. The coalition is organizing delegations to see those federal and state politicians whose position on East Timor is unclear. A lobbying kit is provided and experienced people are available to lead the deputation. Contact Pat or John Gandini on 9361 4678 to take part. The coalition is also supporting the 24 hour vigil outlined on page 1.

♦ For in-depth coverage of the current situation in East Timor see the website of the East Timor International Support Centre - <http://www.easttimor.com>.

FOET (WA) Membership for 1999

Membership	<u>\$10 Waged</u>	<u>\$5 Unwaged</u>	(Please circle)
Last Name Given Name		
Address		
Phone (h)	Phone (w)
Fax	Email
Would you be interested in taking an active role in the Talk Back Radio Action ?			YES NO (Please circle)
Would you be interested in being involved in other activities?			YES NO (Please circle)
Please specify types of activities			(Office/Lobbying/Mailouts/Rallies/Letter writing)