

it appears as object rather than subject. The study provides implicit endorsement of a corporate view of pressure group politics, but clearly contradicts Senator Walsh's alarm that élites have become too powerful. Indeed, they seem to lack initiative and are rather acted upon than acting.

While this is not a handbook for activists and largely ignores the internal dynamics of the environmental movement, post mortem and tactical debates within the movement should be illuminated by the assessment it provides. If this was a green election, how did it manage to unseat Haines, Dunn and Sanders? How has the Hawke Government managed to lose its green sheen so quickly? Why did the electorate show greater interest in State administrations than in national issues?

Just as interesting as the reactions of environmental groups will be those of female commentators, who did not have a voice in the collection. Feminist critics might well place the book in a valuable perspective, because they have been able to formulate some principles for the feminisation of politics. If the 'greening of Australian politics' has any genuine meaning, then it should be possible to point to some evidence that the practice of politics has itself been affected by environmental concerns.

In other words, green politics must involve more than a drive to have some 'green' candidates elected to office. One feature of the Hawke period which has gone largely unchallenged is the manner in which change has been reduced to a marginal activity, and reform has been substituted for revolution. The ALP has learnt how to bend to avoid breaking.

*The Greening of Australian Politics* should be read by all students and scholars, party strategists and environmentalists. It sets new standards for the study of elections, and provides some stimulating analysis. While firmly rooted in established methodologies, the book presents some intriguing hypotheses and poses many challenges.

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*Tony Smith is a regular reviewer for Chain Reaction.*

## Starving in Silence: A Report on Famine and Censorship

By *Article 19*, Article 19, 146pp, £3.95.

Reviewed by **Brian Martin**

Censorship and famine are two things I had never particularly connected with each other until reading this book. Its basic argument is that major famine in the modern world cannot occur if there is open communication of information.

*Starving in Silence* includes two major case studies. The first is the censorship of the famine in China 1959-61 which claimed some twenty million lives. Poor harvests played a role in this massive disaster, but the primary culprit was the Chinese government's push to create communes (part of the 'Great Leap Forward') and its refusal to accept information contrary to its belief in dramatically increasing productivity and abundance. While peasants were slaughtering their draft animals rather than lose them to communal pools, and being forced into inefficient 'back-yard' steel production, the government was deluding itself about massive increases in yields.

The famine would not have occurred had there been a free press with active dialogue about what was happening and why. The Chinese rulers hid the truth from the rest of the world as well as from themselves. The famine remains a taboo subject today.

This part of the report was written by a Chinese scholar who remains anonymous because of his frequent trips to China. His analysis is based on recent publications and on contact with many individuals within China. It is an eye-opening story.

As well the basic insight about censorship and famine, there are a number of fascinating side points taken up. For example, the famine, rather than leading to a slowing of population growth as might be thought, actually triggered a massive increase in the birth rate. Only later, when a stable, adequate diet was provided, did birth control measures begin to work effectively.

The second half of the book deals

with famines in Ethiopia and Sudan in the 1980s. The story here is more complex. In short, while the world was being alerted to certain famines in Ethiopia through massive media attention, there were other famines — for example in northern Ethiopia in 1982-85 and southern Sudan in 1986-89 — that were allowed to happen because of censorship by the governments of Ethiopia and Sudan. The roles of war, government repression and censorship, Western official indifference, and the world media are all crucial in this analysis by Alex de Waal that deserves close study.

Many of the insights in *Starving in Silence* can be applied to environmental issues. Where there is persistent censorship or lack of a real dialogue, incredibly bad environmental practices can persist, as in Eastern Europe. The mass media are crucial in publicising environmental problems, but unless there is in-depth analysis of underlying causes, the result may be superficial, as in the present promotion of 'green' products.

Article 19, the publishers of *Starving in Silence*, can be contacted at 90 Borough High Street, London SE11 1LL, United Kingdom.

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*Brian Martin has a special interest in suppression of dissent on environmental issues.*

