

*New Zealand After Nuclear War*

# THE BACKGROUND PAPERS

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prices, assessment of national vulnerabilities and the implementation of a "stock-take" of strategic resources and equipment.

Given the present lack of preparedness these decisions would be difficult to resolve, let alone implement, and probably impossible if there was widespread overloading or prolonged collapse of communications.

### **Model 1: panic and breakdown**

Perceiving widespread social breakdown as imminent the government resorts to giving extensive powers to the military and police under special legislation. This action and the method of its implementation is perceived as coercive and against people's self-interest. It thus accelerates the process of social breakdown it was intended to prevent.

There is widespread public unwillingness to accept the repressive measures on rationing, directed employment and restrictions on movement. This leads to further social disruption and unrest, undermining the remaining authority of government.

With government credibility gone and widespread social breakdown, a coup is attempted. Regions splinter into small selfish factions dominated by local interests and self-preservation. The engineering and maintenance staff required to keep communications, electricity and gas supplies operating lose their effectiveness as management and co-ordination breaks down. Without these inputs large cities become ungovernable.

### **Model 2: a centralised repressive response**

In this model it is assumed that there is no major social breakdown in the short-term after nuclear war. There is no EMP effect and energy systems are not affected in the initial period. In the drive to sustain an economy which is forced to be largely self-contained, government moves swiftly to take control of the financial sector, suspends normal legal process, sets up a command economy, and conscripts large numbers of people into para-military roles to oversee and implement rationing and directed employment. Control is exercised from the centre with no allowance for regional autonomy. Social unrest is met with further repressive measures which are felt necessary.

The steady decline in health and increasing failure of machinery and essential services over the first 2 years increases the authoritarian response. Rigidity and central control, coupled with the steady erosion of democratic systems, are the dominant features of New Zealand society a few years after nuclear war.

### **Model 3: a flexible regional response**

As in Model 2 there are no major disruptions in the initial post-war phase. However the uncertainty, fear and disruptions felt in city and country are not met by repressive authoritarianism. Despite the importance of "maintaining the familiar", people and government recognise that a period of profound change and adaptation lies ahead. New systems must be responsive to local needs and should avoid premature stagnation.