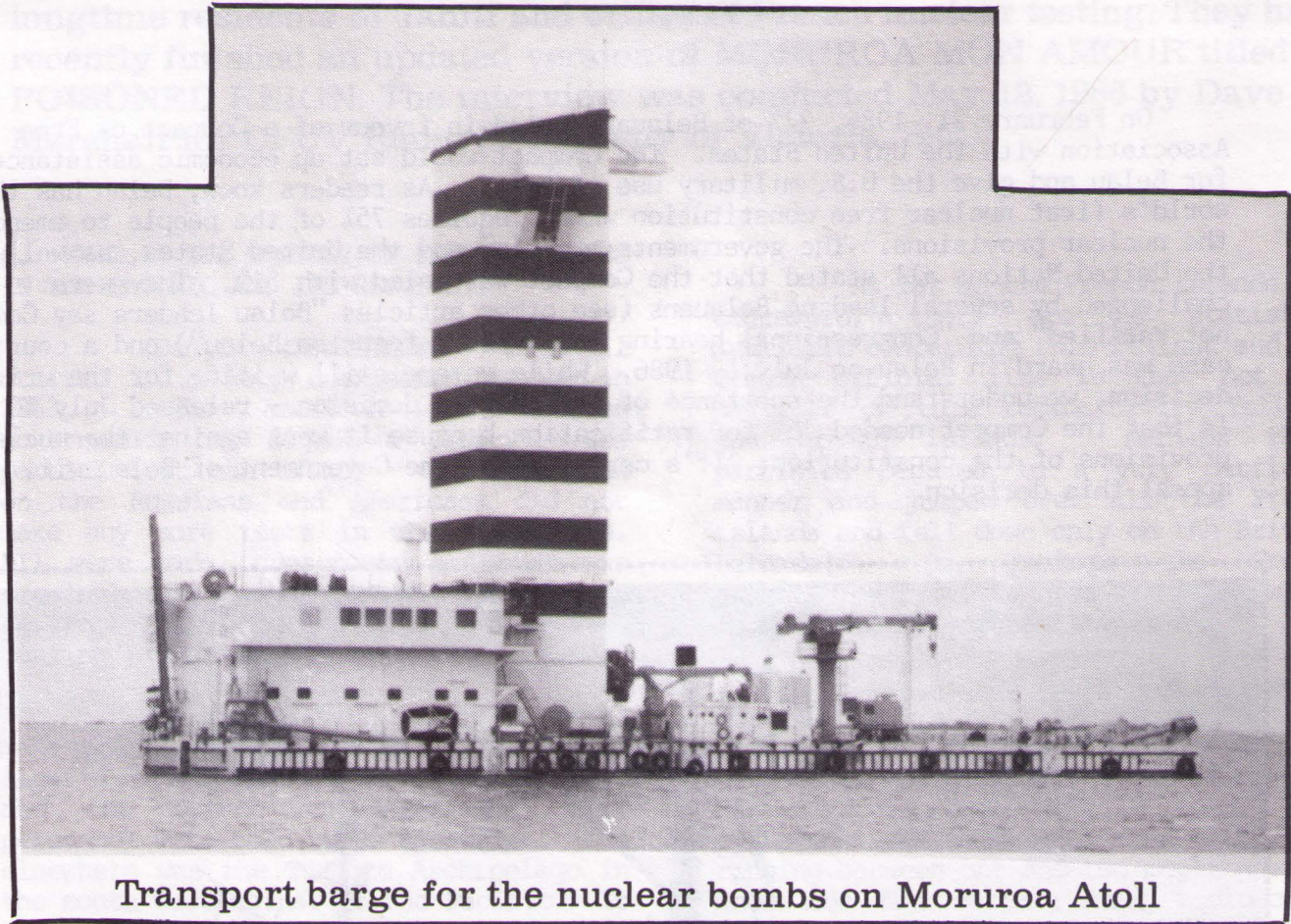


# Tok Blong SPPF

July 1986 #16

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Transport barge for the nuclear bombs on Moruroa Atoll

## Focus on French Testing

Interview with the Danielssons (page 3); Force de Frappe a Pacific Crime (page 13); Greenpeace vs. Gambierdiscus (page 11); Pitcairn speaks out (page 21).

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TOK BLONG SPPF is pidgin english as used in many parts of the Pacific. It might literally be translated as "this talk belongs to SPPF" or, SPPF Newsletter. TOK BLONG SPPF is published four times per year by the South Pacific Peoples Foundation of Canada, 407-620 View St., Victoria, B.C., Canada V8W 1J6, and is available to donors of SPPF (minimum \$10 yr.). SPPF exists to raise critical issues in the South Pacific to a Canadian audience through a variety of public education methods, and to assist in getting relevant Canadian financial, technical and other assistance into the South Pacific to assist islanders in their self-development. TOK BLONG SPPF is edited by Phil Esmonde.

# Late Flash — Belauans Win Suit Against Compact Vote

On February 21, 1986, 72% of Belauans voted in favour of a Compact of Free Association with the United States. The Compact would set up economic assistance for Belau and give the U.S. military use of Belau. As readers know, Belau has the world's first nuclear free constitution which requires 75% of the people to amend the nuclear provisions. The governments of Belau and the United States, as well as the United Nations all stated that the Compact was valid with 51%. They were challenged by several leading Belauans (see other articles "Belau leaders say Compact not ratified" and "Congressional hearing and lawsuit focus on Belau") and a court case was heard in Belau on July 1, 1986. While we are still waiting for the written decision, we understand the substance of the judge's decision - released July 10 - is that the Compact needed 75% for ratification because it went against the nuclear provisions of the constitution. It's certain that the Government of Belau will appeal this decision.



**The FRI was one of the first protest vessels to enter the Moruroa security zone. The year was 1973.**

# The Danielssons on French Testing

The following is an interview with Bengt and Marie-Therese Danielsson, longtime residents of Tahiti and critics of French nuclear testing. They have recently finished an updated version of MORUROA MON AMOUR titled POISONED REIGN. The interview was conducted May 12, 1986 by Dave Marshall for CFUV Radio (University of Victoria, B.C.).

## Q. WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF FRENCH TESTING IN THE PACIFIC AND ITS RESULTS?

(Bengt Danielsson) It all started in a very unexpected manner in 1963. The American and Russian governments had signed a treaty - the partial test ban treaty - and from then on the Russians and Americans did not make any more tests in the atmosphere. All were made underground and that was precisely the year when the French government decided to start atmospheric testing in the Pacific.

The reason why France chose to make these tests in the Pacific was that Algeria became independent in July 1962 and the French engineers and army personnel were told to go elsewhere. The elsewhere was the Tuamotu Archipelago in the south east corner of the Pacific. It belonged to a French colony, still a French colony today, called French Polynesia. We could say that General de Gaulle simply followed the bad American example because the Americans had made sixty-six tests in the atmosphere in Micronesia between 1946 and 1958.

The first French blast occurred in July 1966 but it was a sort of trial. The really big bang took place on the eleventh of September and General de Gaulle himself came out to witness this event. He was in a great hurry so the bomb was actually detonated when the meteorological conditions were very unfavourable. During the following days and weeks there was a heavy radioactive fallout throughout the Pacific and it was measured by various New Zealand technicians from the National Radiation Laboratory.

As far as the French islands are concerned, there are no statistics available concerning this fallout and the French official line is that not one particle of this radioactivity fell on the French islands. Perhaps these particles behaved in a very patriotic manner and jumped over all the French islands and fell down only on the British islands! Or, perhaps the French authorities tried to hide the truth which is a more likely explanation.

During the next eight years forty-one bombs were detonated in the atmosphere above Moruroa and the neighbouring island of Fangataufa, where three hydrogen bombs were exploded. Five hydrogen bombs were detonated altogether ranging between one and two megatons. We know now for certain that radioactive fallout is bad for human health - it was proved in Micronesia. But the danger takes some time before the full impact is felt. There's a delay of between ten and fifteen years before a significant increase in the number of cancer cases shows up. That's the pattern we have in Micronesia, and the radioactive fallout that we received in French Polynesia is the same. The main danger today is that the people who were born before 1966 when the first bomb was detonated - including Marie-Therese and myself - have absorbed into their bodies rather high doses of radioactivity. For the next ten, fifteen and twenty years there will be in all likelihood an increase in the number of cancer cases, especially the sort of cancer diseases induced by radiation: leukemia, cancer of the thyroid gland and brain tumours. We have already noticed an increase.

Q. WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO GET INVOLVED IN THE ACTIVITIES AGAINST THE NUCLEAR TESTING? WAS IT ANY ONE THING OR WAS IT A PROCESS OF BECOMING AWARE OF THE FACTS OF NUCLEAR TESTING IN THE TUAMOTU ISLANDS?

To a very great extent it was personal concern. Nobody likes to be irradiated. Perhaps it was the difference between us and our Polynesian friends, especially in the Tuamotu Islands, because they were totally ignorant of all these dangers. They had never heard about radiation, cancer and diseases caused by radioactive fallout. They did not know about atoms so they had a rather innocent approach at the beginning. They had at the most seen a few pictures of the bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki so that was a direct link for them, i.e. the detonating of those bombs resulting in the instant killing of a great number of people and the actual maiming and tearing to pieces of them. Then the first French bombs went off and nothing happened. They looked around.

Nobody fell down dead so they concluded that the bombs were harmless and it took many, many years for them to realize that radiation death is much slower and insidious. We also felt that we should really try to enlighten the local people and also tell the world what was happening in our islands because there was nobody else to do that. I mean there were not foreign correspondents in Tahiti and the official bulletins were very blandly reassuring, saying there is no harm, these tests are harmless and so on. Right from the beginning we gathered all the evidence we could and began writing for magazines and newspapers abroad, especially in the South Pacific. Gradually we were asked to come to talk at various meetings and rallies and conferences around the world and we hope that we have managed to tell the world this story that otherwise, I think, the French authorities would have managed to hide completely.



Living quarters on the eastern lip of Moruroa atoll

Q. WHAT HAS THE FRENCH RESPONSE BEEN TO YOUR ACTIVITIES, ESPECIALLY SINCE PUBLISHING MORUROA MON AMOUR?

They certainly don't like our activities at all and we have been harrassed on many occasions. We are still in French Polynesia, perhaps because Marie-Therese is a French citizen. It's not possible in a democratic country to deport a national. I'm a Swedish citizen so perhaps they will try to find something to pin on me but so far they haven't succeeded. Then to some extent we have been protected by the local politicians and perhaps even by some political leaders in France who are convinced that we are doing the right thing.

I think it is very important to mention here that right from the beginning of the tests the elected representatives of the local people protested very strongly against these tests and asked the French government not to make them in French Polynesia. Then almost every year our local little parliament, the Territorial Assembly, adopted resolutions asking the French government to stop these test. Of course, all these requests were disregarded. They were told by the French government or the local governor that this was none of their business because French Polynesia is still a colony; it's called a territory, colony has become a dirty word. According to the sort of rule we have, France controls all the defence and also foreign relations and maintenance of order, information and so on. So these protests made repeatedly by the Polynesian leaders were never heard abroad and that's why we took on the task of trying to tell the world what the Polynesians were saying. During the last five or six years they have also asked for the setting up of an impartial commission of inquiry. They want a team of foreign, civilian, impartial doctors to come and make a medical survey. This request was expressed very strongly for instance in December 1981 when David McTaggart sailed to Moruroa on the Vega, a small sailing vessel that has been used by Greenpeace now for fifteen years. He arrived in Papeete just in time for a special session held by the local parliament and during this session the Territorial Assembly asked for such a health survey and of course nothing happened.

Q. WAS THERE NOT A GROUP OF SCIENTISTS THAT VISITED THE ATOLL AND THEN REPORTED THAT ALL WAS CLEAR? YET THE FRENCH SOLDIERS STILL IMPORT THEIR DRINKING WATER, I UNDERSTAND. COULD YOU TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THAT.

I'm happy that you asked that question. The commission or mission that you refer to is one led by Mr. Hugh Atkinson who at that time in 1983 was head of the New Zealand National Radiation Laboratory. He came to French Polynesia with four colleagues: one from the lab and three ecologists from Australia, one of whom was a professor at the University of Papua New Guinea. They were invited by the French government to come to investigate the matter of radiation and its dangers in French Polynesia.

Well, they didn't manage to do much because to begin with they spent only four days on Moruroa and most of the time they had to listen to lectures given by the French officials. They, of course, wanted to take samples, especially on the north coast of Moruroa where some contamination had occurred. The sea had been contaminated, plutonium had been spilled there, and it was also known that in 1981, Moruroa, where huge heaps of nuclear wastes were stored, had been hit by a cyclone. So they wanted to go there and check to see how much plutonium and how much nuclear waste was left, but that request was refused on the grounds that there were top secret military installations and labs on that part of the atoll. Then they wanted to take samples in the lagoon. That was also refused. On the last day they were taken out to sea about one mile from the shore of Moruroa and told that they could take samples of the surface water. Well, the latest blast had taken place three months previously at the depth of 1000 metres so it was not surprising that this time when the distinguished foreign scientists, as they were called by the French mass media, were taken out to sea that the surface water did not contain any radioactive particles. It was too late and too far from the place of the detonation. And that was all they could learn.

They were also given some health statistics, but these statistics were put together by the army doctors. Well, this New Zealand-Australian team did not

contain any medical doctors. The Association of New Zealand and Australian Doctors for Prevention of Nuclear War had in advance asked for permission to send along a few doctors to Moruroa. That had also been refused by the French authorities. So we had only these ecologists and the radiation experts and when they asked about health matters they were given some statistics. They are very fragmentary and totally unreliable. Nevertheless, since this report was published, the French authorities, meaning cabinet ministers, admirals, generals, colonial governors, and so on have never missed an opportunity to quote these statistics. Of course, each time they say that these five distinguished foreign scientists have looked into the health matter and conclusively proved that there is no health hazard and no increase in the number of cancer cases. And, of course, they do not say that if you look at the report all it says is that these statistics were given to us by the French army doctors and we can't say anything about their reliability. So, I mean, the scientists have been used by the French authorities and it's been a big propaganda trick. They should have protested more forcefully. It is enough to read this report to see that they learned nothing about the health hazards.

Q. YET I UNDERSTAND THERE ARE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES BEING FELT ALREADY IN THE TUAMOTU ISLANDS. I WAS WONDERING IF I COULD ASK BOTH OF YOU WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN ON MANGAREVA.

(Marie-Therese Danielsson) Yes, for example we were there last year in March and I felt so much pain for the people of Mangareva because they cannot eat the fish. Mangareva has a big lagoon and it's far away - 1500 kilometres - from Tahiti. The people receive very little food from outside because there is only one ship every two months. So they must rely on their own food, and they lived mostly on fish until the first tests were made in the atmosphere. Suddenly the fish became poisonous with ciguatera. Since then people have been unable to eat any fish from the lagoon without becoming sick every time. The ciguatera toxin accumulates in the body so each time a person eats contaminated fish, the reaction increases. And ciguatera can cause death. So the health of the people has seriously deteriorated.

At the same time I know that there are many women in Mangareva who have had miscarriages after the first atmospheric tests. For some years after, the women, when they became pregnant, had to go to Tahiti where they could be under medical care. But in Mangareva most women miscarried.

I UNDERSTAND IN TAHITI ITSELF YOU HAVE SEEN SOME EVIDENCE OF THE GENETIC PROBLEMS THAT RADIATION CAUSES.

(M-T.D.) Yes, there are quite a few cases but I can't tell you exactly how many because we have not statistics on anything. The French have never published any statistics on miscarriages or still births or handicapped children. But we know that there are quite a lot of children who have become handicapped or were born without an arm, or deformed legs, or mentally disturbed since the beginning of the nuclear tests. And now there are a lot of babies born with some defects; for example, it seems that there are quite a number of children born now without an anus. That's a thing I learned because I went to see a baby born like that in the hospital. That same baby had a kidney defect too. And I must say that the father of that child has been working on Moruroa now for ten years. His wife had a baby a few years ago which was stillborn at five months.

Q. IS THERE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT THE FRENCH WORKERS ON MORUROA? HAVE THEY INCURRED ANY PROBLEMS AT ALL THAT YOU KNOW OF?

(M-T.D.) Yes. That was how we learned a lot of things because when Mitterand became president, the unions of the French workers on Moruroa wrote a report to government asking for more care because there had been some accidents, and they knew that they were not being well taken care of. It is the same situation as with the Polynesians, you know - we have no statistics - but we know there were some cases. Another thing is the number of cancer cases in Tahiti. You've read in the papers just now of the accident in Russia [Chernobyl] - the first people the Russians took are the children and I have noticed during these last few years that in Tahiti many young people around 30 years of age have cancers now.

Q. ARE THESE RADIATION LINKED CANCERS?

(M-T.D.) Yes, they are. These people were young children when the tests began. I know of many who died and I know some who went to France where they have been receiving treatment and having surgery. They are all now around 30 years old, between 28 and 35, even a little bit more. And these people as children were born and brought up in Tahiti, so you could get a lot of fallout from the rain and the radioactivity. In Tahiti the children are always bare-footed and bare-skinned and not many wear hats so you can get much more radiation on the upper part of the body.

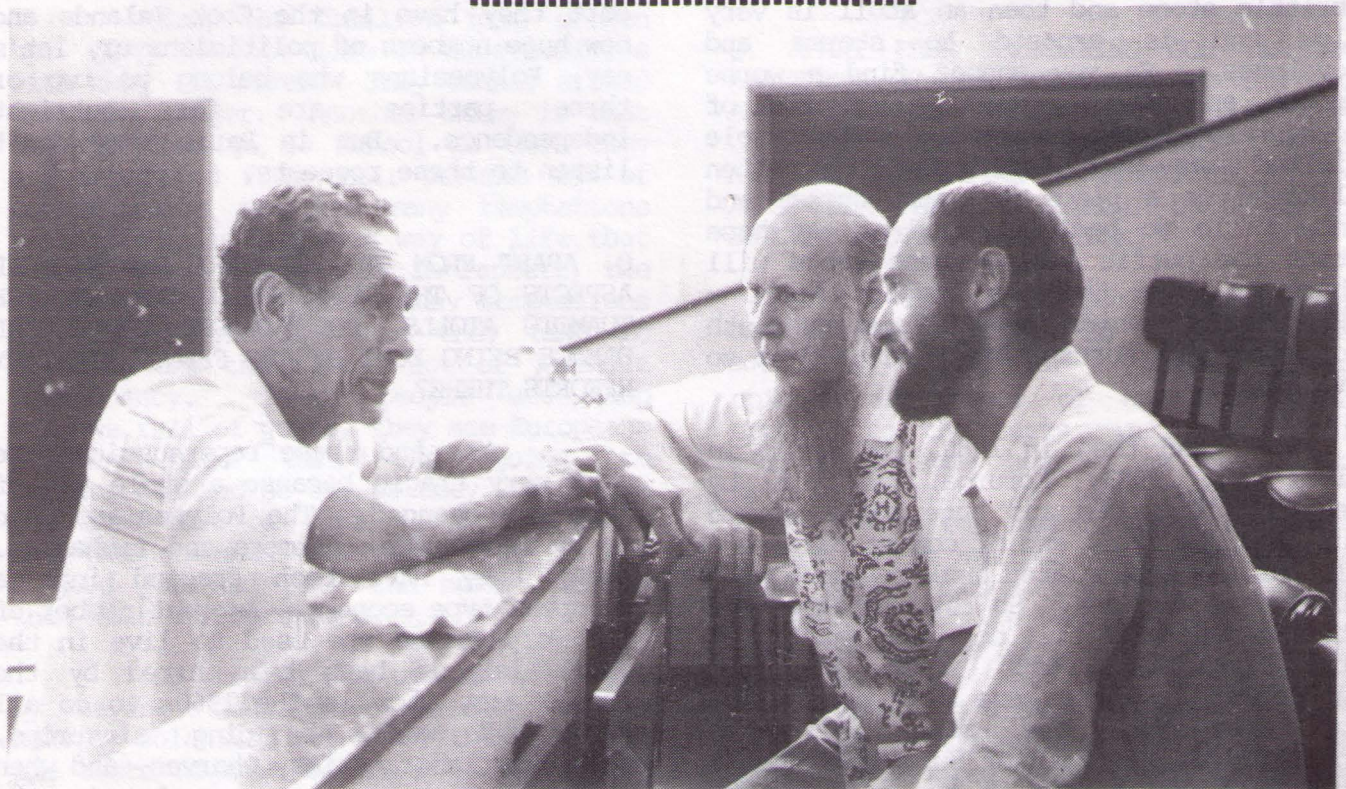
Q. WELL I KNOW YOU HAVE LIVED FOR A LONG TIME IN TAHITI. WERE THESE CANCERS NOT APPARENT BEFORE THE TESTING STARTED?

(M-T.D.) No, not at all. For example, we lived for one and a half years in one of the atolls of the Tuamotus and at that time I can be absolutely sure that there was not one case of cancer in the 120 people living on that atoll during those 18 months we were there. There were some TB cases but not one case of cancer and there were

very few people dying from cancer before that, very, very little and I had never seen one birth defect before.

Q. SINCE THE RAINBOW WARRIOR AFFAIR THE FRENCH SEEM TO HAVE TAKEN THE ATTITUDE OF NOT WANTING TO LISTEN TO ANYONE. DO YOU FEEL THAT INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE WILL HAVE ANY EFFECT, DR. DANIELSSON?

I think so - or at least there is a good chance that international opinion will have some effect on the French government. We have an excellent example of that. In 1972, David McTaggart sailed to Moruroa. He was followed in 1973 by the Fri along with several other protest vessels. And at the same time there was a sort of boycott in Australia and New Zealand of French goods and French shipping lines and airlines and eventually both the Australian and New Zealand governments sued the French government. They initiated a court action at the International Court in the Hague and France then refused to recognize the authority of the Court. But anyway, due to all this bad publicity France eventually decided to cease the atmospheric testing.



A meeting in the Territorial Assembly between autonomist leader John Teariki (left), Bengt Danielsson (center) and French ecological leader Brice Lalonde (right), December, 1981. Lalonde, a French Presidential candidate, was a member of the protest vessel VEGA.

Well, when I say France, I should perhaps say Giscard d'Estaing who became president of France in 1974 after the premature death of President Pompidou. He was a little bit more reasonable man so he decided as a result of this storm of protests in the southern hemisphere - they extended from as far away as South America too - to go underground. Unfortunately he didn't give his men in Moruroa orders to come back to France and do the tests there. This would have been the best solution for everybody concerned, especially for the French government because it is definitely easier and cheaper to do testing in a huge desert region of France rather than on an atoll on the other side of the world. Well, that is how the Americans and the Russians acted. The Americans never made any underground tests at Bikini and Enewetok. They moved to Nevada and the Russians since 1963 have done all their testing in Siberia.

So France decided - or Giscard d'Estaing decided - to make these tests at Moruroa. It was a terrible mistake because an atoll is the worst possible place for making underground tests. An atoll is too small, too narrow; the coral is too porous and underneath there is a mountain made of basalt which is a very brittle stone and then an atoll is very low and is exposed to storms and cyclones. So you cannot find a worse place and as a result all sorts of disasters have occurred. The whole island has been perforated, is often likened to a piece of Swiss cheese and now it is so badly damaged at the base that the outfit making these tests will have to move them to another atoll - Fangataufa - which is 40 kilometres south of Moruroa. Moruroa has been used up so to speak.

And then in 1980, and again in 1981 and 1983, Moruroa was hit by enormous cyclones and huge waves washed up over the atoll and of course carried a lot of the accumulated nuclear waste with them into the sea. So these underground tests have definitely not been safer than the previous tests made in the atmosphere. There have also been a lot of accidents, the most well-known occurred on the 25th of July 1979 when a big hole was opened in the side of the atoll at a depth of some 400 metres. It

was an enormous hole so at that time there was undoubtedly a particularly heavy leakage out into the ocean and this is of course a great danger for the health of the islanders living around Moruroa. These radioactive particles are absorbed by certain sea animals like squid, sea turtles, turbos and tridacnid clams, and these are precisely the sort of animals on which the islanders live.

Q. SINCE THE NEW CALEDONIAN PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN OCCURRING, DO YOU SEE ANY HOPE THAT THE POLYNESIAN PEOPLE MIGHT HAVE ANY FURTHER CHANCE OF AUTONOMY OR DO YOU FEEL THAT WHILE THE NUCLEAR TESTING IS GOING ON, TAHITI AND THE TUAMOTUS WILL REMAIN A FRENCH COLONY WITH LITTLE OR NO AUTONOMY AT ALL?

There's no doubt that these two issues are closely related, even intertwined. I mean the issue of the nuclear tests and the issue of political progress or decolonization of French Polynesia. Let us put it this way: as long as the French government is determined to pursue nuclear testing at Moruroa, this government will never give any real powers to the Polynesians. The Polynesians have been fighting now for 25 years for internal self government of the sort they have in the Cook Islands and now huge numbers of politicians or, let's say, Polynesians who belong to two or three parties are for outright independence. But in Paris they don't listen to these requests.

Q. APART FROM THE MILITARY AND MEDICAL ASPECTS OF THE TESTS BEING DONE IN THE TUAMOTU ATOLLS, DO YOU SEE ANY SOCIAL DAMAGE BEING DONE BY THE FRENCH MILITARY EFFORTS THERE?

Yes and these repercussions are very very tragic because a whole way of life has changed. The Polynesians used to be independent farmers and fishermen. Today they have been dragged into a European type economy. A great number of the Polynesians who used to live in the outer islands have been hired by the French army back in the 1960s to do all sorts of work, building airstrips, barracks, laboratories, wharves, and when all these bases were completed, the workers were laid off and they were told





to go home to their islands in the Tuamotus, the Marquesas and so on. Of course, they did not and they are still in Papeete and they live in horrible shacks in huge slum areas. Then, in order to survive they must work on a regular basis to get a salary and this means that their whole life has been transformed.

Then the families have broken up. They used to live in huge families with many relatives. They cannot afford that any longer. Another thing is that the children go to school so that they are separated from their parents and of course there are too many temptations with the whole European way of life that exists today, especially in Papeete, the capital. There are too many temptations for the Polynesians and they take to drinking and there is a lot of juvenile delinquency. These people see shop windows full of goods, they see Europeans driving nice cars and going to restaurants and so on, so they would like the same sort of life. But they don't have the necessary qualifications to get a good job and they can never compete then with the Europeans.

So we can sum up the situation by saying that these islands became heavily colonized for the first time when the tests began. Before 1963 there were extremely few French or Europeans living in the islands, only a very small fraction and they had mostly married

Tahitian women and been absorbed into the Polynesian society. But today we have an enormous colony of expatriates and they are the masters. The Polynesians still form the majority of the population - they are about 70 per cent of the total population - but they have very little to say about what happens in their own country.

Q. APART FROM INCREASING OUR PERSONAL AWARENESS OF THE SITUATION, DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS OR RECOMMENDATIONS OF WHAT CANADIANS CAN DO? WOULD YOU SUGGEST AVOIDING SUPPORTING THE FRENCH BY STAYING AWAY FROM FRENCH POLYNESIA OR WOULD YOU SUGGEST PROTESTING TO THEM?

I think that public opinion has considerable weight. So if in all free countries there is a strong public opinion in favour of the Polynesians opposed to the tests, in the end this will have some bearing on the French policies. This is what happened in 1972-73. It can happen again. And then of course the various free countries can also work through the United Nations. Take a matter like decolonization. It's a matter for the Special Committee set up in New York at UN Headquarters. Practically all other colonies on earth have become independent nations. Why haven't the three French Pacific colonies (French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna) got independence? Well, in the UN France has always

explained that these three island groups are not colonies; they are an integral part of the French Republic and France has got away with that because the delegates of some other countries have been very poorly informed because public opinion everywhere has been almost non-existent and thus this French position has never been challenged. With better information throughout the free world, perhaps the national policies of these governments will change and perhaps they will speak up in the UN. And recently, of course, the Rainbow Warrior sabotage helped a lot. This was very bad publicity for the French themselves. During the General Assembly of the UN a whole series of delegates spoke up, not only against the terrorist methods used by the French secret agents, but also against the testing in the Pacific and against the maintenance of the colonial rule in the Pacific. For the first time there was very heavy criticism and almost a sort of consensus on these issues in the UN.

Q. WHAT DO YOU FEEL THE MOOD IS IN FRANCE AT THIS POINT?

(Marie-Therese Danielsson)

French people don't know very much about the Pacific and Tahiti and Moruroa. And the French are so happy that the tests are done there because they would not want them to happen in France. We say, you know, to the French government - "If

you say that the bombs are harmless, why don't you blow up your bombs in Paris?" There are several sites in France where they could do the testing and even the French Army has several huge training grounds where the ground is suitable for testing but the government doesn't change its policy. It is afraid that French citizens will be against testing in France and would therefore throw out the government in power at the time, whether it is the right or the left - it's exactly the same - it thinks it would be defeated. So I think France doesn't care very much for us.

Q. IT GOES AGAINST THEIR POLITICAL GRAIN, YOU MIGHT SAY?

(M-T.D.) Yes, most French people are quite indifferent.

Q. SO IN SUMMING UP, YOU MIGHT SAY THAT BY INCREASING PUBLIC OPINION IN CANADA AGAINST THE PACIFIC NUCLEAR TESTING, ONE IS NOT ONLY PREVENTING THE POISONING OF CURRENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS BUT ALSO AIDING THE EFFORTS FOR AUTONOMY OF THE POLYNESIAN PEOPLE UNDER FRENCH RULE.

Yes. These two issues are closely tied together. By helping the Polynesians the tests would stop; or by stopping the tests, in the end the Polynesians will get independence.

**Autonomist leaders in 1975. At the right is Pouvanaa A Oopa who was a veteran of World War I and put in solitary confinement in France for criticising French control in Polynesia. A monument to Pouvanaa sits in front of the Territorial Assembly.**



## THE MANGAREVA STORY

# Greenpeace v. Gambierdiscus

Ever since French combat divers sank the *Rainbow Warrior* in July, the world has been asking why they committed this "absurd and criminal" act — to use the words employed by President Mitterrand himself in his first statement on the affair, rapidly forgotten. Our answer in a previous column (PIM Oct. p19) was that the French military high command learned well in advance, through various snoopers and spies, of the (in their eyes) unforgivable plans hatched by the Greenpeace leaders to embark on this vessel for the 1985 protest cruise to Moruroa both a group of Tahitian freedom fighters, and a couple of medical doctors. What seemed especially to alarm the French authorities was that they rightly suspected that the task of the doctors was to land on other atolls in the Tuamotus in order to examine the effects of radiation on the environment and the inhabitants after the 112 nuclear tests made so far.

One of their supposed targets was the Mangareva or Gambier islands, 250 nautical miles east of Moruroa, where a major health problem has long existed. What has happened there is that all fish in the circular, 24-km wide lagoon have been poisonous since the French tests began in 1966, and that as a result all the 500-600 inhabitants have been poisoned, most more than once.

Some readers may find it a little surprising that the Mangarevans have knowingly gone on eating poisonous fish over such a long period, considering the severe suffering they must endure each time in the form of fever, vomiting, headaches, muscular pains and in some instances partial or total paralysis. But for those who understand that there is no other protein source on these rocky, barren islands, the risks the islanders deliberately and cheerfully take become more comprehensible.

Like all true Polynesians, few

of the Mangarevans can resist the temptation to catch and eat the swarms of fat fish they see every day in the lagoon. Some have tried to protect themselves by feeding morsels of the fish they now and then catch, against all warnings, to cats and dogs. The result has been that these poor substitutes for experimental guinea pigs have rapidly expired.

The intensity of the epidemic soon attracted the attention of American and Japanese toxic fish experts, and eventually also prompted the Louis Malarde medical research institute in

Papeete, originally set up to combat elephantiasis and tuberculosis, to launch a large-scale investigation. One thing that all these scientists immediately agreed on was that the symptoms described above were not caused by eating fish directly contaminated by radioactive fallout from the French tests at Moruroa. Incidentally, radiation of this type has been fully documented in Micronesia by American toxicologists, whereas no comparable data from French Polynesia is available. Most of the fish irradiated there during the years from 1966-74, when nuclear tests were made in the atmosphere, have by now left the area, died — or been eaten by the islanders.

Thanks to the brilliant research carried out by Dr Raymond Bagnis of the Institut Louis Malarde, the whole

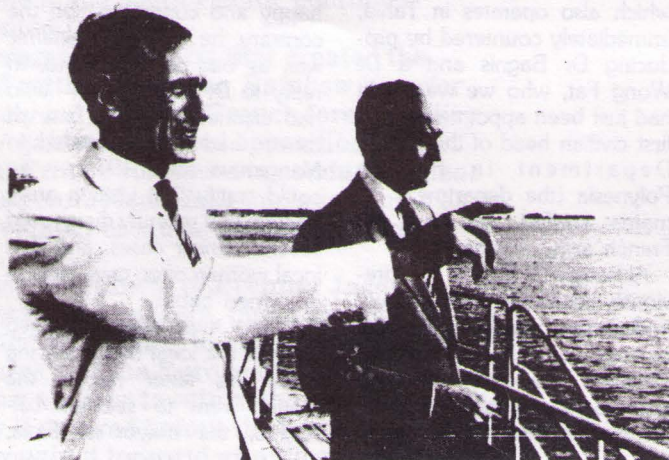
## Postmark Papeete



## Marie-Thérèse and Bengt Danielsson

mechanism of the totally different type of ciguatera fish poisoning was eventually discovered. Briefly stated, it is caused by the ingestion by lagoon fish of a species of microscopic brown algae of the dinoflagellate family, named *Gambierdiscus toxicus* after the island group where it was first identified by Dr Bagnis. His research team has also clearly established that this algae, which already in pre-European times occasionally caused fish everywhere in tropical waters to become poisonous, multiplies in an explosive manner when the coral reef on which they grow is damaged and/or killed.

In the past, the damage was mostly inflicted by natural agents like cyclones and tidal



Top: French Defence Minister Paul Quiles (left) standing on a security platform with Prime Minister Laurent Fabius, shortly after the pair had witnessed France's first-ever publicised nuclear test explosion at Moruroa on October 24. Below: Mr Quiles is interviewed following a swim in the Moruroa lagoon. — AP wirephotos.

waves. But with the advent of Europeans, the destruction is mostly wrought by dredging, dumping, dynamiting, sewage and waste disposal. An iron ship wrecked on a reef is also a powerful coral killer.

The question that from the beginning was uppermost in our minds was therefore: Who polluted the Mangareva lagoon? The inhabitants unhesitatingly singled out the CEP army bombers as the sole culprits, and complained bitterly along these lines to the few French governors and administrators who cared to visit the remote and isolated islands. To no avail. And when these official visits were reported in our French-language newspapers, the stories were exclusively about the friendly and hospitable Mangarevans, and the wonderfully warm reception they gave their beloved French masters.

We denounced this conspiracy of silence several years ago in these columns (PIM Nov '81, p22), and pointed out, among other things, the disastrous effects on the health of the islanders from such sources of contamination as radio-active fallout, the frequent discharges from warships, and the dumping by the CEP of contaminated material in the Mangareva lagoon.

We repeated the gist of our revelations and accusations during the International Coral Reef Congress held in Tahiti at the end of May this year (PIM Aug p7), when a special semi-

C. I. R.

nar was devoted to the problem of ciguatera fish poisoning, only to be told by Dr Bagnis that, unfortunately, the search for the ultimate cause of the Mangareva epidemic was a problem quite outside and beyond the scope of his strictly toxicological and clinical studies. We nevertheless came away with some hitherto unpublished ciguatera statistics for French Polynesia showing that the incidence of ciguatera is 45 times higher in Mangareva (Gambier) than in the Society Islands! But, as we said, without any explanation for this astonishing difference.

When Greenpeace president David McTaggart was interviewed in August by several British, French and American TV channels he mentioned with good reason the plight of the poor Mangarevans as a particularly tragic example of the health hazards caused by the French Pacific tests.

The French RFO TV station, which also operates in Tahiti, immediately countered by producing Dr Bagnis and a Dr Wong Fat, who we were told had just been appointed as the first civilian head of the Health Department in French Polynesia (the department remains staffed and run by French army doctors).

Although Dr Bagnis had previously stated that he had never undertaken research into the causes of the fearsome ciguatera epidemic in Mangareva, he now gave emphatic assurances that it was partly

occasioned by natural phenomena, and partly by certain public works, mentioning for the first time some mysterious scheme "to improve the coastline".

His main message was that the epidemic was almost over and that the happy islanders are again, as in the good old pre-bomb days, able to eat the fish they catch in the lagoon with no problems whatsoever.

Now it so happened that the mayor of Mangareva, Lucas Paeamara, was at that precise moment sitting in front of a TV set at the home of a friend in Tahiti where he was on a rare visit to attend to some administrative business.

His immediate, angry reaction was to dash off a letter to the local TV and radio stations, with copies to the two French-language dailies, to complain that it was a lie and an insult to his people to pretend that the ciguatera epidemic was over, and that the population was happy and contented. On the contrary, he said, the epidemic was as bad as ever. And, in reply to Dr Wong Fat — who had claimed that one case of cancer had been recorded in Mangareva since 1974 — he could testify that visiting army doctors had recently discovered several cancer cases, and that local women often gave birth to deformed babies.

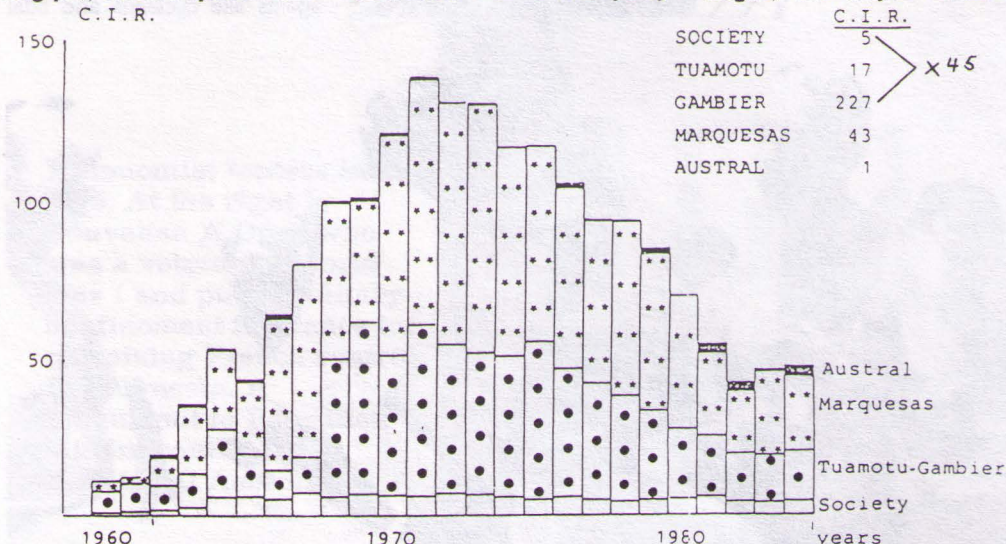
When two weeks passed without the local media having made his letter public, the mayor went to see his colleague, the mayor of Faaa,

Oscar Temaru, who is the most outspoken pro-independence and anti-nuclear politician around, since Charlie Ching was arrested in March and sentenced on dubious grounds to a two-year jail term. Oscar Temaru called a press conference, challenged the official version of the great Mangareva epidemic and distributed copies of Mayor Paeamara's suppressed letter. One of the newspapers later published it in full, which represented a considerable victory.

Oscar Temaru's closing remarks at his press conference (which somehow went unnoticed in the local media) were as follows:

*"The sad truth is that the only ones who have tried to help us are the Greenpeace ecologists. But was this fear of having scientists poking their noses into the Mangareva mess really a sufficient reason for the French intelligence service to embark on the risky operation of sending combat divers to Auckland harbor to sink the Rainbow Warrior? For we must not forget that the 3000 French soldiers and foreign legionnaires on Moruroa could easily have repulsed an attack by a dozen ecologists. We have therefore to look for a more convincing motive, which, alas, is not difficult to find. Greenpeace had planned to embark on the Rainbow Warrior doctors and scientists ready to undertake the health survey the Territorial Assembly has been clamoring for since 1981 — and to start it at Mangareva! The ultimate aim of the sabotage was thus to prevent the unpleasant truth from being known."*

Very obligingly, the French authorities shortly afterwards confirmed Oscar Temaru's claims by refusing the substitute Greenpeace tugboat permission to make even a short call at Mangareva during its much publicised protest vigil in the waters around Mururoa. It can therefore be said that *Gambierdiscus tricoloris* won the first round. But many more rounds remain to be fought, and we are confident that the Greenpeace people will come out on top in the end, because they are fighting for a just cause. — Marie-Therese and Bengt Danielsson.



The diagram, based on data compiled by the Louis Malardé Institute, Papeete, shows the geographical incidence of ciguatera in French Polynesia from 1960 to 1984. The figures in the top right hand corner are for the incidence of ciguatera per 1000 inhabitants in the various island groups of the territory — Mangareva had an incidence 45 times higher than the Society Islands.

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# *Force de frappe* a Pacific crime

With the help of United Nations Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, the French government has at last been forced to pay reparations to New Zealand for the sabotage of the Greenpeace anti-nuclear protest ship *Rainbow Warrior* in Auckland harbor by the French secret service. But France's greater crime in the South Pacific continues unabated and unrepented.

The change of governments in Paris that created the climate for a civilized settlement of the *Rainbow Warrior* affair has unfortunately not civilized French foreign policy in the South Pacific. Against the united opposition of the nations of that region, France continues to conduct nuclear tests there. So far this year at least four nuclear bombs have been exploded in the vicinity of Mururoa Atoll in colonial French Polynesia.

The readiness of the government of Premier Jacques Chirac to offer an unqualified apology, pay New Zealand \$10 million in damages, and stop trying to block imports of New Zealand butter and meat into the European Community, suggests France is now anxious to return the test program to the relative obscurity it enjoyed before the bombing of the *Rainbow Warrior* brought it to world attention. With the exile to a remote French military base of the two French agents imprisoned in New Zealand, there will be fewer reminders of the *Rainbow Warrior* and the unfavorable publicity the incident gave to French nuclear policy.

But France's nuclear test program remains the world's most deplorable because only France is still exploding bombs outside its own boundaries.

The position of the South Pacific nations is that it should at least take its tests home to metropolitan France. The government of Canada, which remained shamefully silent throughout the *Rainbow Warrior* affair, should set an example for the rest of the Western world by publicly endorsing that stand.



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**An Editorial from the Vancouver Sun,  
Vancouver, B.C., July 12, 1986**

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# Belau Leaders Say Compact Not Ratified

TEXT OF MAY 7, 1986, TELEX TO U.S. CONGRESS AND TO THE UNITED NATIONS TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL SENT BY 14 TRADITIONAL AND ELECTED LEADERS OF SIX STATES OF BELAU, ASSERTING THAT THE COMPACT OF FREE ASSOCIATION HAS NOT BEEN RATIFIED.

" WE THE UNDERSIGNED AS LEADERS IN THE PALAUAN COMMUNITY PRESENT THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT.

WE FIRMLY STATE THAT THE COMPACT OF FREE ASSOCIATION AS NEGOTIATED BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF PALAU AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES HAS NOT BEEN DULY RATIFIED FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

1. The Government of Palau told the voting public that a 75 percent majority was necessary for ratification. This was not attained.
2. The political education program was entirely too short, less than one month. The political education campaigned for the ratification of the Compact instead of educating the public. Copies of Palauan language version were available only few days before the plebiscite.

"SIGNED:

GOVERNOR AICHI KUMANGAI OF NGARDMAU STATE  
 CHIEF BEOUCH NGIRMENGANGED OF NGARDMAU STATE  
 GOVERNOR AND CHIEF ROMAN TMETUCHEL OF AIRAI STATE  
 CHIEF RENGULBAI BRIKUL OF AIMELIIK STATE  
 CHIEF NGIRAKEBOU POLLOI OF NGECHESAR STATE  
 BILUN (WOMANCHIEF) GLORIA GIBBONS OF KOROR STATE  
 MRS. GABRILLA NGIRMANG OF KOROR STATE  
 PETER SUGIYAMA, EX-SENATOR  
 KEBEKOL ALFONSO AND ULDEKEL NGIREMGIAU OF KLTAL-RENG  
 KLOTERAOL ALEX OF KOROR STATE  
 SENATOR KUNIWO NAKAMURA, KOROR STATE  
 KATSUTOSHI BECHESRRAK, SPEAKER, KOROR STATE LEGISLATURE  
 MITS SOLANG, EX-SENATOR, PELELIU

# Congressional Hearing and Lawsuit Focus on Belau

*James Orak, Portland Belauan, recently testified before a Congressional subcommittee (Public Lands and National Parks chaired by Representative Sieberling, D-OH) on whether or not Congress should approve the Compact of Free Association with Belau. The following is his report on the hearing and related information.*

On Sunday evening May 18, 1986, I had a phone call from Roman Bedor, lawyer and activist in Belau. Mr. Bedor informed me that a lawsuit was going to be filed on May 19, 1986 in the Belau Supreme Court, addressing February's election on the Compact of Free Association. It challenges: 1) the passage of the Compact on the basis that it did not receive the required 75% to overturn the nuclear free clause in Belau's constitution; and, 2) certain irregularities in the U.S.-funded political education process on the Compact. I was told that the Portland Belauans' petition outlining grievances on the Compact voting process was circulated among our Belauan leaders and that encouraged them to pursue the lawsuit. I was also grateful and honored to be asked to serve as a personal representative for High Chief Ibedul and his colleagues before a U.S. Congressional committee hearing testimony on the Compact.

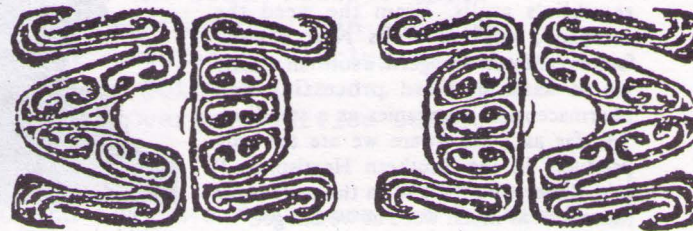
I had already planned to testify at those hearings, though I had wondered if I was a legitimate person to speak on behalf of my country and my people. After I received the call from Mr. Bedor I felt very needed, and my spirit was lifted very high about going to Washington, DC.

Monday May 19, I left Portland, destination Washington. That night I met with many of the people who would be testifying with me the following day. I was very impressed by everyone who spoke in deep support of Belau on its sovereignty, self-sufficiency, and attempts to gain independence. I have great respect for these people, who represent national church and environmental organizations, and appreciate what they are doing for Belau. I hope all Belauans can be aware that we are not alone. There are many around the

world who support us in our struggle.

On May 20, 1986, I delivered my testimony to Representative Sieberling. After first talking about the problems with the recent plebiscite on the Compact, I finished my statement by saying, "The Compact does not fulfill the obligation of the UN Trusteeship Agreement to help Belau gain independence. Under the Compact Belau cannot independently make decisions about the use of its land or harbors. We are tied to the U.S. military interests for as long as the U.S. desires. If the U.S. honors the obligations of the Trusteeship, at least Belau should have the choice to terminate the Compact on its own terms." Unfortunately, Sieberling seemed reluctant to express his sympathy for our concerns, but said that he would try his best to see that "Belau would get what's best for Belau."

I had lunch that day with Susan Quass, Micronesia Coalition Coordinator (New York) and Anne Simon from the Center for Constitutional Rights, who is a legal co-counsel for the lawsuit on the Compact. She briefed Susan Quass and me on the technicalities of the lawsuit. I have joined Ibedul Yutaka Gibbons (among others) as one of the plaintiffs in this suit.



During an important meeting with other testifiers I learned more about the controversial IPSECO power plant recently completed in Belau. Strangely, the Belauan government accepted the contract for the present plant, which generates 16 megawatts of power when the country only needs 4 megawatts of power to accommodate its needs. Also, they chose the IPSECO plant, at a cost of \$32 million, over another company that offered to build the same size plant for \$10 million. To my

understanding the Belauan government took the highest bidder, heaven only knows why.

The IPSECO corporation has already declared bankruptcy and the power plant is not operating. Now the Belauan government is also facing bankruptcy if it defaults on the loan for the plant. Originally we were told that IPSECO would guarantee the loan, and that when the power plant was installed it would operate and pay for itself.

I can't help but ask myself, was the power plant in Belau designed to accommodate U.S. military needs in Belau? And what is the relation between the financial settlement to Belau under the Compact and the need to repay IPSECO loans? Could this be a reason why we have been pressured by many of our government representatives to approve the Compact of Free Association between Belau and the U.S.?

Reprinted from Asian-Pacific issues news published by American Friends Service Committee, Portland, Oregon.

## MARINE FARMING

### Harvest from the ocean

The coral reef that fringes the north-eastern coast of Viti Levu, at 10,200 square kilometres Fiji's biggest island, is being prepared for sea-weed farming. New Zealand company Coast Biologicals is busy persuading scores of Fijian villagers to add the cultivation of the small bushy *eucheuma* seaweed to the production of such soil nurtured crops as yams, cassava and bananas.

By last month its Fiji manager, Maurhi Robertson, had close to a hundred seaweed growers on his list and was daily getting more inquiries from people eager to cash in on the \$350-a-tonne price for dried weed being offered by the company.

Coast Biologicals is working in Tonga to establish similar farms. And it is in touch with the government of Kiribati about buying the harvest from farms being established in the lagoons of some of the republic's atolls. From the weed the company, working at its New Zealand factory, extracts carogeen, a substance used world-wide by food processing and pharmaceutical companies as a stabiliser. "As far as I am aware we are the only producer in the Southern Hemisphere," said Robertson. "We're in the market for just about as much weed as we can get."

*Eucheuma* farming has a potential for becoming a major cash crop for islanders living in coastal regions who are otherwise dependent on limited fish sales and the production of small amounts of copra, fruit and vegetables from areas which may be ravaged by cyclones, floods or drought.

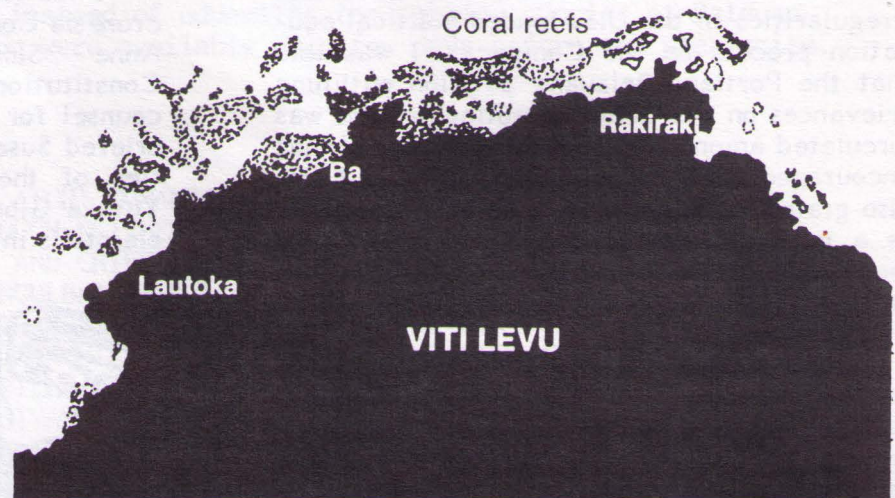
Robertson estimates that in Fiji a man can be set up as a seaweed farmer for an outlay of about \$3,000 and very little subsequent costs. The investment would include a rugged punt and outboard engine needed to ferry weed ashore. Since the fast-growing weed is ready for harvesting in

only 112 weeks, at least four crops a year can be managed comfortably.

Since the yield can be about five tonnes an acre, "we're looking at a return of \$7,000 or \$8,000 an acre," said Robertson. It's a return for a crop that needs no ploughing, fertiliser or cultivation. The weed, which originates from the China Sea, thrives in knee-deep depths in lagoon or on reefs with sandy bottoms.

Coast Biologicals prefers about 30 young plants to be tied to a line several dozen metres long. A farm is a block of about 800 lines. The weed matures in 10 to 11 weeks

Viti Levu: seaweed farming centre.



and is then harvested and sun-dried on a raft. Drying takes two to three days and reduces eight tonnes of wet weed to a tonne of dry stuff. Drying is delayed if rain falls. But on the other hand, says Robertson, the company pays a premium for weed washed with fresh water.

Bales of dried weed are shipped back to the factory in New Zealand, which was opened in 1980 to extract agar, a substance used for cultivating bacteria, from another seaweed, *pterocladia*, harvested from rocks along the New Zealand coast.

Robertson said that, in Fiji, seaweed farming could be highly profitable for 500 or 600 families. "What we are looking for is numbers of people getting involved. If we have 100 farms doing 10 tonnes, that's 1,000 tonnes. At 1,000 tonnes a local processing plant becomes viable. Each acre plot can be comfortably managed by a husband and wife and two or three kids."

Coast Biologicals, which has formed a local company with the Fiji Development Bank as its 20 per cent partner, is asking its farmers to cultivate weed in 10 patches so that a portion of the crop is ready for harvesting almost each month.

As a proposition, seaweed farming sounds uncomplicated. But not quite. In

Tonga, farms established in the Vavau group are raided so badly by rabbit fish, which graze on the weed, that production has to be stopped during January-March, when the fish are most voracious. All the harvest is gathered in December so that it can't be snaffled by the pests from January onwards. Rabbit fish are a great nuisance in Fiji, says Robertson. But after getting pilot farms established in the Rakiraki and Tavua areas of Viti Levu last year the company was pained to see them swept away by a series of hurricanes at the beginning of this year. □



# Pango: A New Pacific Voice?

Some Pacific Non-Government Organizations (NGO's) recently moved to establish a consultative body to promote and facilitate co-operation among NGO's in the Pacific.

The body would be known as the Pacific Association of Non-Government Organizations or PANGO. The 29 people from 11 countries meeting in Honiara during April, agreed in principle to form this widely representative association.

The delegates saw the association as a consultative and co-operative body for NGO's working in the Pacific. One delegate, Kevin Clark, of the New Zealand Coalition for Trade and Development, said that he saw the need for "partnerships and organizations for information sharing, an increased awareness of issues in development" and "a network that is beyond a funding relationship." Much of the discussion also suggested a belief that too often, funding bodies are able to exercise too much control. "If we do not act, others will act for us", commented Bernard Narekobe, Chairman of the South Pacific Appropriate Technology Foundation in PNG. Another indication of the direction PANGO might take came from the Nasional Kommuniti Development Trust of Vanuatu. Their delegate suggested that competition for funding can be a source of conflict. Pacific NGO's should maintain a "direct linkage and relationship" with their overseas partners, with "little interference from (PANGO)", he said.

Delegates included representatives from NGO's in Tonga, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Canada, Australia, England, the U.S. and New Zealand. Also present were 'Inoke Faletau, Director of the Commonwealth Foundation, Tom McKay (Washington) and Louis Kuhn (Fiji) both from USAID, Jean-Pierre Dubois of the EEC, and Bekenibeu Paeniu of SPC. Solomon Islands Government was represented by the Deputy Prime Minister, Ezekiel Alebua, and Leonard Maenu'u, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Finance.

Delegates were pleased at the breadth of the proposed association. In September 1984 the first South Pacific Conference for National Non-Government Organizations was held in Nuku'alofa, Tonga. That conference was initiated by Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific (FSP), to explore ways in which newly formed national development groups (e.g. Solomon Islands Development Trust; Nasional Kommuniti Development Trust [Vanuatu]) in the South Pacific could more closely collaborate with each other and with FSP metropolitan agencies. The Honiara meeting opens the way for broader representation, including national NGOumbrella groups such as those in Samoa, Fiji and Solomon Islands, and other organizations with regional programmes such as the Overseas Service Bureau in Australia, CUSO in Canada and the World YWCA.

The meeting drafted a constitution for PANGO and issued a "Statement of Resolve" signed by the 15 NGO's represented. Both papers make references to "integral human development", "human development, both social and economic", and "awareness of issues in human development". The message coming from this conference is that NGO's are looking beyond economics in their understanding of development. Organizations working at the "grass roots" are finding that answers to many intractable problems can only be found in the village. As a recent report from the Solomon Islands Development Trust states, "the urban youth problem will be solved first in the village." There was consensus among the delegates that central to development are Participation, Community and Self-Reliance. As Bill Armstrong, Director of the Overseas Service Bureau, commented in his address to the conference, by this definition, metropolitan countries have little to offer the Pacific in terms of a model for development. "The search for development is something we must do together", he said.

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# A maverick hurricane leaves 103 dead and a multi-million dollar damage bill

# Solomons face the task of rebuilding

By ROBERT KEITH-REID

**F**irst came the wind and the rain. Then came the floods, landslides and logs.

For Solomon Islanders who survived Hurricane Namu which struck from May 16 to 20 it was the torrents of earth, water and logs pouring from the collapsing hillsides of the interior of central and western Guadalcanal that has scarred their memories.

Colossal log-jams, estimated to have accumulated to hundreds of thousands of tonnes in some places, combined with great landslides, formed barrages that then burst. That released floods that dumped silt and timber metres-deep on the fertile Guadalcanal Plains, along the north coast of the 5200-sq km island, the largest in the 900-island group.

"You've got to see it to believe it," is what everyone who goes to see the mess of silt and logs on the plains reports.

The mess just happens to be sitting on the country's main agricultural areas for vital palm oil, rice and cocoa.

It was the great deluge of rain dumped by Namu as it moved slowly along the northern coast that led to the destruction on Guadalcanal.

On the other big island of Malaita, to the north east of Guadalcanal, and the home island for Prime Minister Sir Peter Kenilorea and about 75,000 other people, it was the wind that did the damage. The hurricane lay almost unmoving on the island for about five hours and caused absolute havoc with 90-to-100 knot winds. It toppled hundreds of thousands of trees, perhaps millions of them, and eliminated the leaf houses, built with poles and leaf thatch, that is the normal rural habitat.

"Two-thirds of Malaita, and Small Malaita was totally devastated," the Prime Minister told ISLANDS BUSINESS. "In my village we had 33 or 34 houses. Thirty-two went down. The only house standing with the church was mine, which is semi-permanent, and that lost its iron roof. That shows the extent of the destruction, almost 100 per cent."

Damage was caused also to the northern part of San Cristobal, the south-west of the other two big islands, to the small island of Sikaiana, to the east, near where Namu formed, and to the small islands of Rennal and Bellona, to the south-west, which got a comparatively light bashing.

On June 10 the latest official estimate by the National Disaster Council in Honiara was 103 people killed — including 38 people in one village hit by landslides and floods near Gold Ridge in central Guadalcanal — and more than 30 people missing.

But by June 15, the government had still not been able to build up a detailed picture of the situation in parts of inland Guadalcanal and Malaita. In some areas of Guadalcanal hillsides were so unstable that several hundred people were evacuated from their villages by helicopter because of the landslide risk.

A six-man British Army signals team engaged on helicopter and foot reconnaissance trips decided against exploring some areas. "It's just too risky," said Warrant Officer Percy Beynor of the 30th Signals Regiment.

There was grave concern in Honiara about Lees Lake, originally a small lake about 200 metres up in Chimu Hills, 55 km south-east of Honiara. Formed when a landslide blocked a narrow valley in the 1970s, this was boosted by Namu's rainfall to become a stretch of water about two kilometres long and at least 30 metres above its normal height. It was being held by fresh but unstable landslides. Lieutenant-Commander Darryl Neild, an Australian navy adviser to the Solomons Police Force, said if the natural dam burst a great torrent of water would rush down to the plain, scouring a heavily populated valley and then dumping more silt and logs on part of the plain.

Prime Minister Kenilorea told ISLANDS BUSINESS that not less than 90,000 people, about one-third of the entire population, had been affected by the cyclone and that estimate was "conservative". Solomon Islanders were familiar with hurricanes, "but this particular Namu has come at a rate and a scale that is totally unprecedented. It is impractical for people to get back to their normal traditional life because all material for houses has been blown down."

Ninety per cent of the country's people live in leaf houses. In hurricane areas it would be seven to nine months before building material would regrow. Where palms had been blown down it would take seven years to grow replacements capable of yielding the fronds needed for housing, the Prime Minister said. "We will have to feed many people for three to six months. It is not so much the lack of help from outside, as the lack of organisational structure to ensure that the food gets to the people who need it at the right time. I am hoping that people will be sensible and eat the food they can salvage from their gardens now and save their emergency supplies for later."

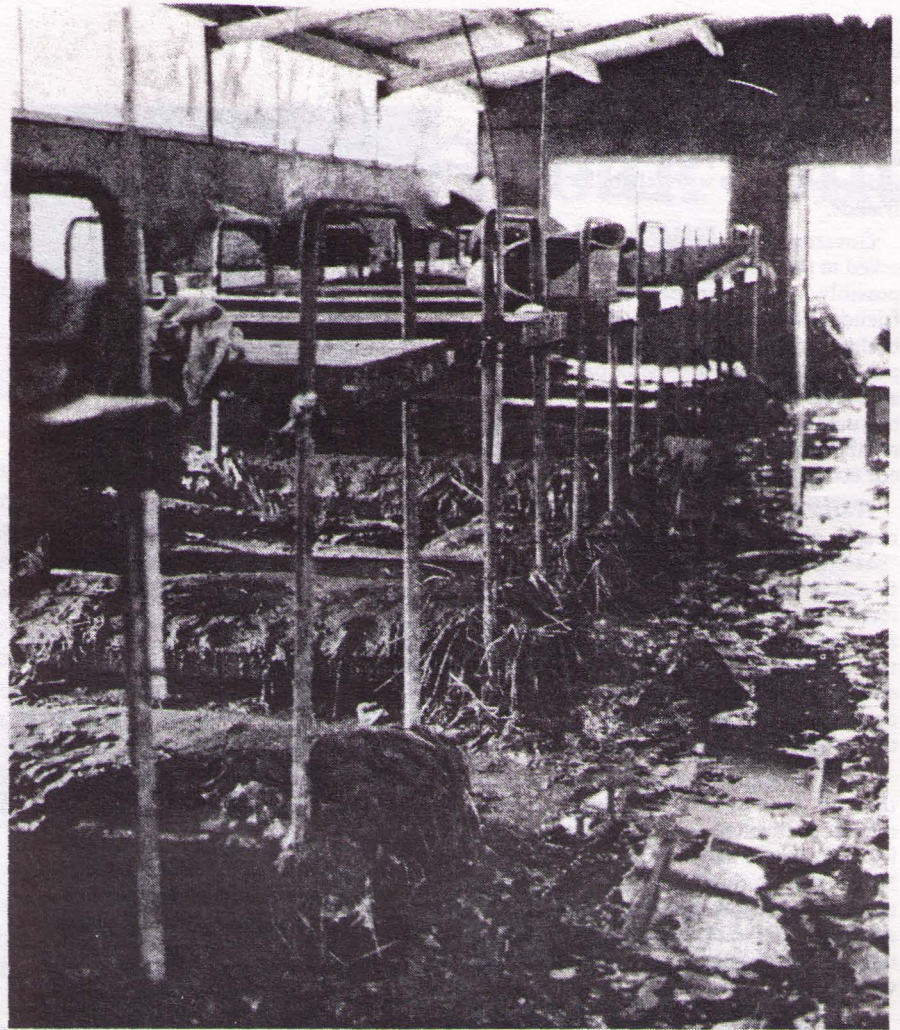
Hurricane Namu hit a country that economically was already sagging at the knees. A timber, tuna, palm oil and copra boom in the early 1980s has given way to a depression. Copra, tuna and palm oil prices have toppled. The government has only recently begun to seriously grapple with a serious deficit problem caused by careless spending.

Finance Minister George Kejoa is preparing to drastically revise his \$898 million budget for this year since revenues from oil palm and copra exports will be far lower than the low levels originally anticipated.

The government provisionally estimates the cost of repairing damaged roads, bridges, schools, clinics and other infrastructure at \$89 million.

Copra output, which was expected to drop to about 33,000 tonnes or less this year from 42,000 last year due to the disincentive of low prices, is now expected to fall by another 25 per cent due to cyclone damage. Cocoa output will be only slightly affected, since the Guadalcanal Plain area produces only about 400 tonnes. Tuna fishing and canning is losing money, like everywhere else. But Japan's Taiyo group is proceeding with a \$10 million-to-\$15 million investment in building a new cannery that will open in about two years.

The two big blows affect rice and palm oil. After attempting to make the Solomon Islands self-sufficient in rice by growing it on a 1000-hectare farm on the Guadalcanal Plains, the government was thinking of abandoning the scheme to use the rich land occupied by it for a more profitable crop. Research aimed at solving the pest and weed problems affecting the rice crop had been started. But this was wiped out by floods and it is almost certain that the rice scheme will now be wound up. That means



Mud and grass in the hostel at Selwyn College on the outskirts of Honiara.

that the country will have to fully resort to rice imports again. Although imported rice is much cheaper the purchase of it will still be a significant drain on foreign reserves.

Exports of palm oil are critical to the Solomons economy. Grown on the plains as

a joint venture involving the government, landowners and the Commonwealth Development Corporation, exports of oil and palm kernels total about 22,000 tonnes a year normally and previously earned about \$18 million. About two-thirds of the 5000 hectares of palms were covered by silt in places more than a metre deep. Many areas are also badly littered with logs.

General manager Brian Woodhead estimates that damage to the plantations will cost about \$6 million to put right, including \$2.25 million needed for repairs to houses and other buildings. About five to 10 per cent of the palms will be lost, he expects, with a consequent loss of about 2,400 tonnes of oil worth \$US600,000 at current prices. Oil palm production was resumed by the second week of June, but the destruction of the important Balasuna Bridge, which was smashed by logs, means that more than half of the palms are on the other side of a river to the plantation's factory. Until the river is rebridged the loss of production will cost \$US10,000 to \$US15,000 a day.

Kenilorea said the combination of the fall in export earnings due to poor commodity prices and the cost of the hurricane was "putting the nail in the coffin. The Minister of Finance has indicated that the emphasis

Hurricane Namu reduced most of Liwe Village on Small Malaita to rubble.



will have to be on rehabilitation, but it is the view of the government that we should not let rehabilitation interfere with our normal programme of development activities. We have had some very helpful and gratifying indications of help with rehabilitation from friends."

Government technical advisers had been asked to prepare "a package of how we can possibly share our problems with our friends. For example, we could be seeking budgetary support. We could be looking at possible balance of assistance payments for a number of years. So the strategy we will be pursuing is not only to seek assistance for rehabilitation, but some assistance to aid our economy as well."

Hurricane Namu was a maverick. It was nearly three weeks outside the normal "season" for hurricanes, which is reckoned to end by late April. Hurricanes normally form to the south of the Solomons and then move away to strike at Vanuatu or Fiji. But this one formed to the north. "It was born out of a number of depressions. It was confusing, it was spread out and it appeared that it would fall apart," said Neild.

"It was forecast by Australia, Fiji and by the met. bureau here. We were a month outside the cyclone season and we have not for many years had a cyclone form where Namu did. It should have fallen apart. I think the best forecaster would have forecast that. But it didn't. It came back, a very tight compact cyclone, very small and very, very strong."

Leaving a trail of damage in a 50-kilometre area around its eye, it began gaining strength as it passed Sikaiana, a collection of islets on a coral platform, slowed down north-east of Malaita, stopped, then resumed a south-westwards course over the south tip of the island. Then it turned directly west so that the eye moved offshore along Guadalcanal's south coast. It was then that it picked and dumped onto the island the tens of millions of tonnes of water that were to cause such havoc.

Resuming a south-westerly track it skirted Rennell and Bellona and then quickly lost strength and collapsed. "Satellite pictures were so confused," said Neild. "It was very hard to see exactly where the eye was. It was drawing cloud and water from the whole Solomon Islands area, and from the satellite pictures you could see cloud streaming in from Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu."

At Sikaiana most leaf houses were blown apart and the sea drove into freshwater wells, polluting the island's only supply. On Malaita there were, surprisingly, only five deaths. Several coastal villages were wrecked by high seas, most food gardens were washed away and trees and foliage were blown away.

Kenilorea, who was flown over cyclone areas in a Royal Australian Air Force plane, found that Malaita was "just like a bush garden, where you burn down the under-



A car where the floods left it

growth ready for planting. That's what Malaita looks like at this time."

On Guadalcanal, Honiara escaped with damage to a few houses and interruptions to power and water supplies. On the plains however thousands of people experienced a bombardment reminiscent of the days of 1942 when the area was fought over by the Americans and Japanese. It was in the plains area and their backing hills that landslides and torrents of floodwater claimed 95 people dead and about 30 missing.

Knocked down by winds or landslides, thousands of trees were washed along steep narrow valleys to be discharged onto the plains as floating missiles that tore down houses, ripped through plantations and piled up against three important bridges that all finally collapsed under the pressure of them. People scrambled up into trees as floods rose with astonishing speed. Cocoa manager Stewart Addison watched as a normally placid river burst over its banks to rise about 10 metres above its normal level. It flooded his house — which was on stilts — climbing by 1½ metres in 30 minutes. "The river just changed course. Everything got ripped away by logs — cars, the bottom of the house. I thought I was dead," he said.

Had the main floods and a cascade of logs occurred at night instead of in daylight the death toll would have been far higher. Thousands of flood victims began to move into Honiara. Henderson Airport disappeared under three metres of water and had its runway damaged. In Honiara, as the wind began to get up, the Central Hospital showed signs that it might collapse. Patients were shifted into church halls, schools and the university centre. At Bellona 160 houses were reported flattened and in west Rennell 20 were down.

Help began to flow in on May 21, two days after the hurricane had passed. Two Australian Air Force Hercules arrived, each carrying an Iroquois helicopter plus tents and medical supplies. Two New Zealand Hercules arrived with relief supplies, army

engineers and a medical team and the Australian naval ships *Stalwart*, *Flinder*, *Brunei* and *Betano* were diverted to Honiara. Three United States Air Force Hercules delivered tents, plastic sheeting for use as temporary shelter, water purification equipment, water tanks and plastic containers. Britain despatched \$125,000 and six army signallers, the European Economic Community pledged \$640,000 and the United Nations Development Programme contributed \$US1.1 million for rehabilitation. Other aid was announced by Japan, West Germany, Taiwan, Fiji, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Nauru plus other international and regional agencies.

But a patchy communications network means that it will probably not be until July that the Solomons Islands government will have succeeded in accounting for all that Hurricane Namu did, and to then begin planning for repairs and reconstruction. "It is one of the challenges our country faces — inadequate communications and transport," said the Prime Minister.

Since such a high proportion of the population continues to retain a self-sufficient, rural, traditional lifestyle, the government anticipates that most hurricane victims will recover and rebuild independently of outside help. Many people made homeless quickly reconstructed some shelter for themselves. However the stripping of foliage from trees was by the second week of June causing hardship for people in need of shade. Northern areas of the Solomons, including important copra and logging districts, were untouched by the hurricane and will be able to make a contribution to the recovery of the shattered southern districts.

There was considerable praise from outside advisors for the efforts made by Solomon Island government officials in responding to the disaster. "I must say without reservation the disaster was totally outside the expectations of our National Disaster Council," said Kenilorea. "The officers of the council and people in Honiara responded well, but frankly I cannot say that for some of the provincial governments. Even now we are not receiving important information that we should be receiving. They just don't have a sense of urgency in a difficult position."

In dishing out emergency food supplies, tools and other material the government is aware that while there is a real need in certain districts, it will have to monitor the distribution system to decide when to begin tapering supplies off. "Solomon Islanders are people who bounce back," said the Prime Minister. He and his government wish to avoid the risk of destroying that sense of self-reliance. A prime concern of the disaster relief organisation is that the relief isn't overdone. □

# Pitcairn Islanders Speak Out

An Editorial in Pitcairn Miscellany, July 1985

We are not blind to what goes on around us. The islands of French Polynesia are our nearest neighbours. At Moruroa Atoll, some 600 miles from Pitcairn, the French have been carrying out nuclear tests for many years. Initially, the tests were atmospheric, and for a time fall-out was monitored on Pitcairn. It is widely known that during this time radiation levels rose above normal levels acceptable to human beings on more than one occasion. Now the tests are underground, but there is evidence to show that radiation has leaked through fissures in the coral and that Moruroa is slowly being undermined. Many of the fish in French Polynesia waters are contaminated and cannot be eaten. The state of the fish around Pitcairn is not known and we continue to eat them. The anti-nuclear stand of the New Zealand Government is widely known, yet ironically, New Zealand ships thousands of tonnes of cement to Tahiti from where it is taken to Moruroa to "plug" the holes.

The French manage to pacify the people of French Polynesia with massive financial handouts. These people are not ignorant about what is happening around them, but many live for the day when the French will pull out and they can enjoy the fruits of the handouts. One can only hope that they will live to enjoy anything.

It was recently rumoured that the waters around Oeno Island, 75 miles from Pitcairn, and part of the Pitcairn group of islands, was to become a target area for testing of United States Trident missiles. There has been no official confirmation of this, yet earlier this year, unbeknown to us, a United States Naval vessel became disabled near Oeno Island while laying some type of hydrophonic sensing devices on the ocean floor, which would help pinpoint the splash down location of any missile. It is understood that the vessel had to call upon the French for assistance and was towed to French Polynesia. If the Americans were in the area we would have appreciated a courtesy call.

Pitcairn is often considered to be one of the most isolated inhabited islands on the globe, yet the threat to our security from nuclear disaster is no less than in many other places.

It seems to be a fact that whoever comes to power in many countries, whether elected or not, inevitably becomes a maniac hellbent on creating devices to destroy mankind. Whether their name be Mitterrand, Pinochet, Gorbachev, Amin or Reagan, the intent behind their actions is equally evil. Some wolves merely manage to disguise themselves in lamb skins a little more successfully than others.

Meanwhile, since we can offer little intimidation with a collection of various rifles, shotguns, and rusted "Bounty" cannons, we'll live in the hope that New Zealand cement won't crack under the strain, and that the Americans have become sufficiently immortal as to be beyond human error and their Trident missiles are directed to land in the right place. At the same time, "Miscellany" will speak nicely of the ships which call, because regardless of where they are from, we need them.

# Japanese welcomed back to Micronesia

**B**y the many thousands they step off the planes from Tokyo, two by two, one of the steadier processions of travelling couples since Noah's Ark.

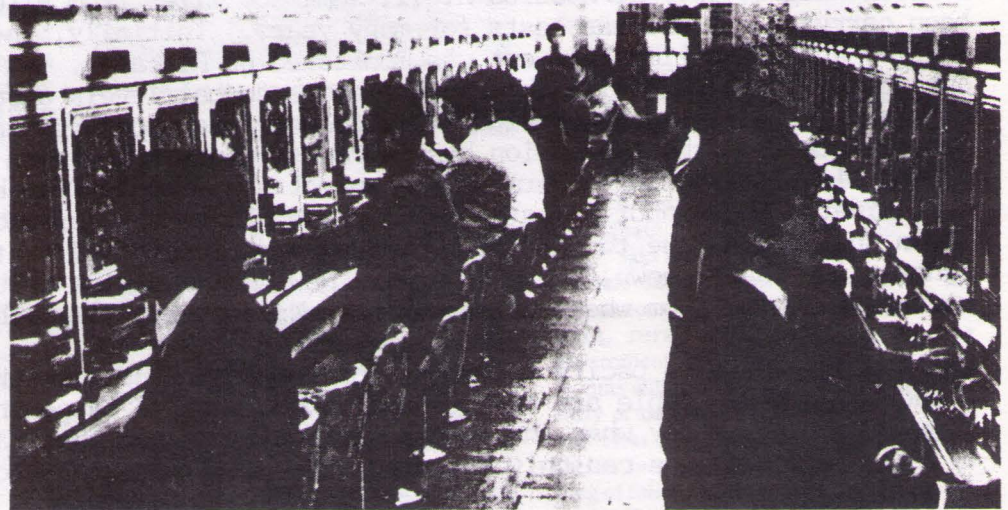
They are Japanese honeymooners, and the large numbers who flock every day to the northern tier of Micronesia provide evidence that Japan has regained economically some of the Western Pacific islands that she lost militarily 40 years ago.

Japan dominates here, even though Saipan is part of a United States commonwealth these days, much of the Northern Marianas, in fact, has been turned into a Japanese warm-weather playground over the last 15 years.

There is only one real industry, tourism, and most major hotels are owned by Japanese interests. Four of every five visitors to Saipan are Japanese, usually newly-weds lured by relatively inexpensive package tours.

The same is true in far larger numbers on nearby Guam which is an unincorporated territory of the US with important American air and naval bases. Guam's national slogan is "Where America's Day Begins."

But of the 368,665 visitors to Guam last year, 82 per cent came from Japan. The US\$221 million they spent accounted for about half of all the retail sales in the territory. In some sections of Saipan and Guam, Japanese signs are almost the only ones to be seen. Maps of Guam sold at the airport are written in Japanese, not Eng-



Pachinko players in Tokyo . . . seeking diversion in a crowded nation, Japanese dream increasingly of serendipity in the Pacific.

lish. Duty-free shops are stocked with high-priced clothes from Europe, Italian and English leathers, French perfumes, and so-forth — a great range of goods considered prestige symbols (and much more expensive) in Tokyo and Osaka.

The influx of Japanese tourists has meant growth for other industries as well.

Two years ago there were three Japanese construction companies with offices on Guam. Now there are 10, because of the growing demand for new hotels, roads, airport construction and commercial buildings.

About the only non-Asian competition in this industry comes from New Zealand. A contractor from Auckland told me of attending a large meeting where bids were accepted for a small project related to a hotel being built on Saipan. "Except

for one or two South Koreans," he said, "I was the only non-Japanese in the room."

Japan controlled Micronesia -- the Marianas, plus the Caroline and Marshall Islands -- from 1918 to the end of World War II in 1945. Micronesia was, and remains, a strategically sensitive area, covering three million square miles of the Pacific and comprising about 2000 islands that today have a total population of only 135,000.

Some islanders sometimes talk of the Japanese era as the "good old days," partly reflecting disenchantment with the United States, whose UN trusteeship for the last 38 years has produced little in the way of economic development.

In the 1930s Japan operated sugar cane plantations, fisheries and phosphate mines on many islands. The Garapan section of Saipan bustled with shops,

cinemas, and geisha houses. Islanders were treated like second-class citizens, (much as Koreans are still in parts of Tokyo today), but at least, some say, things were lively.

The United States wrested military control of the Marianas from Japan after fierce battles in 1944. In a notably grim end to the fighting on Saipan thousands of Japanese civilians committed suicide by hurling first their children, and then themselves, from cliffs on the island's northern end. Yesterday's horror has, however, become today's photographic opportunity, and now Japanese honeymoon couples take group bus tours to Suicide Cliff where they stand for the almost obligatory group and individual pictures.

Older Japanese, often accompanied by Buddhist priests, come periodically on

the bones of dead relatives and friends.

The resurgence of Japanese economic influence is concentrated in the Marianas, but it is beginning to be felt elsewhere in Micronesia, too. From Palau in the western part of the island chain to the Marshalls in the east, local political leaders regard Japanese tourism as their best chance to stimulate economies now largely dependent on United States aid.

The Japanese government has also begun to show renewed interest in its former territory. It has steadily increased economic assistance, giving US\$17.6 million since 1980 to three semi-autonomous governments in the American trusteeship -- Palau, the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia.

A good deal of this money has gone for road construction and for fisheries-related projects such as deep-storage refrigerators being built on the islands of Ponape and Dublon in the FSM. In addition, Japanese tunaboat fleets contribute up to US\$2 million a year for the right to fish in Micronesian waters.

Micronesians, especially those most critical of the American stewardship, say they are glad to receive Japan's help.

"The Japanese went about it the right way," says Asterio Takesy, a senior official on Ponape. "They asked us what we needed, what we wanted. The Americans are always telling us what to do. They say: 'This is what your problem is, and here's how you must solve it.'"

A foreign ministry official in Tokyo, Akihiro Aoki, said Japanese aid was based on the government's belief that "these countries have to be politically and economically stable."

How deep Tokyo's investment will go, however, is not clear. Japanese businessmen say they are hesitant to move in because of lingering economic and social problems that have kept Micronesian development at a low level throughout the post-war period.

But, today, it is no longer a matter of "the Japanese are coming." In Micronesia they have again arrived, and are being warmly welcomed. — *Clyde Haberman in The New York Times.*

**Reprinted from Pacific Islands Monthly**

## U.S. HAS ITS EYE ON MARSHALLS RICHES

Majuro Nov. 5 The Marshall Islands may be loaded with under sea riches according to a just published report of the Interior Department.

These islands head the list of potential sources for ocean bottom crusts filled with cobalt, manganese and platinum, all considered "strategic" metals by the U.S. government.

The Minerals Management Service of Interior is currently studying sea floor resources in the 200 mile area surrounding Hawaii and Johnston Island.

In a recently published 21 page report, the MMS identified the regions of the Pacific with the greatest potential for high cobalt-manganese concentrations. They placed the Marshall Islands at the top of the list, followed by Kingman-Palmyra, Johnston Island and Wake Island. The Federated States, Palau, Guam and the Marianas are expected to have smaller deposits of the valuable metals.

According to a Pacific Daily News report, the MMS study said: "The crusts are found on the

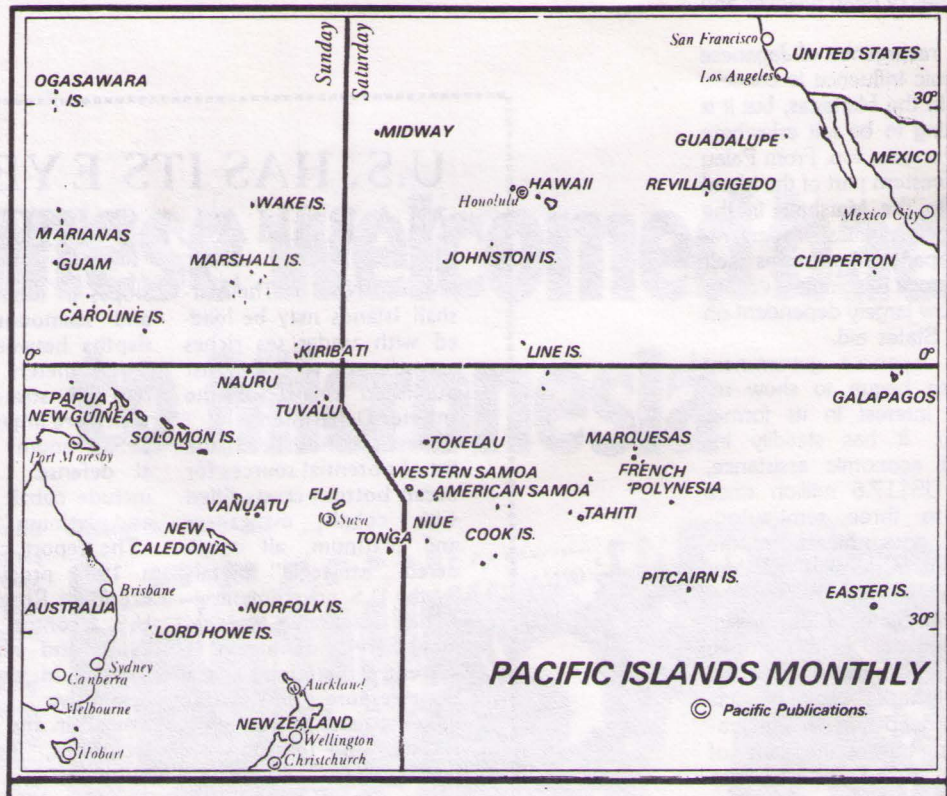
slopes of submarine ridges and seamounts at water depths between 800 and 2,400 meters. They are rich in strategic metals which are important to the U.S. economy and national defense. The crusts include cobalt, manganese and platinum."

The report claimed that a 1983 proclamation of President Reagan gives the U.S. control over the living and non-living resources in the 200 mile "exclusive economic zones" in the U.S. and its territories, including the Marshalls.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Steve Muller stated, however, that the Compact clearly gives the Marshall Islands control of seabed resources. He cited article two in the foreign affairs provisions which stated that the Marshalls shall have full authority for matters "relating to Law of the Sea, and marine resource matters including harvesting, conservation, exploration or exploitation of living and non-living resources from the sea, seabed or subsoil to the full extent recognized by international law."

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