

# Tok Blong SPPF

JANUARY 1987 #18

---



*Sugar factory, Lautoka, Fiji*

*Elaine Briere*

Photo by Elaine Briere

---

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.



## SPPF UPDATE

As we move into the new year, we wish all our friends and supporters best wishes in both their personal lives and in their work endeavors.

The SPPF still (Phil Esmonde and Margaret Argue) continue to be pleased with the growing positive response to our major efforts at informing Canadians of social justice and development issues of concern to Pacific Islanders.

We continue to communicate and send information across Canada, as well as maintain an expanding network of contacts in the islands and with other organizations sharing our interests.

We also continue to implement programs on a national, regional and local basis. Locally we now have a group of 50 supporters whom we directly inform of speakers, slide shows, social gatherings, etc. Over this last year we have tried to provide ongoing local activities for our supporters. These have included a film series as well as a supper for an artist from Papua New Guinea. We are grateful for the response and support we receive locally and the help we get in mailing out this newsletter, which now goes directly to over 400 individuals and groups in Canada and overseas.

The response to Tok Blong SPPF has been very positive. We always welcome your comments and suggestions. We also welcome brief articles which might be of interest, as well as photocopies of news clippings, etc. which also might be of interest to readers.

Some of our upcoming plans include: organizing and hosting the fourth annual Canadian Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) support network meeting, February 13-15 in Crescent Beach (south of Vancouver); holding a public gathering in Victoria on March 1st (NFIP day in the Pacific); putting together a comprehensive listing of our audio visual resources to increase their use; planning a tour of Canada by a Tahitian leader; and responding to the increasing amount of paper that seems to cross our threshold.



## UNITED NATIONS REINSCRIBES NEW CALEDONIA

The General Assembly of the United Nations has voted 89-24 in favour of reinscribing New Caledonia on the list of non self-governing territories. The vote came on December 2 after 2 days of acrimonious debate. Thirty-four countries, including Canada, abstained.

The positive vote at the U.N. means that the situation in New Caledonia will be reviewed annually by the Decolonization Committee. The South Pacific Forum members who brought the issue to the U.N. hope that a U.N. mission might be sent to observe this July's important referendum in New Caledonia, a referendum with great impact on the territory's future. The main question still to be answered for the referendum is the key issue of electoral reform (i.e. who is allowed to vote?).

---

## MICRONESIA TRIP PLANNED

Phil Esmonde will be travelling through Micronesia from January 9 - February 8. Primarily an exposure tour, Phil will be meeting with a variety of active islanders. Readers of Tok Blong SPPF will get a first-hand report in upcoming issues.



# CANADA ABSTAINS AT U.N.

## — OUR THOUGHTS

Canada's abstention (an action we can refer to as "diplomatic fence sitting" at best) is disturbing. It is disturbing because our government is well informed on the New Caledonia question, having received Kanak delegations at its U.N. Mission as well as correspondence from us, and is thus well aware of France's colonial stance and historic and current treatment of the Kanaks. Canada's abstention is further disturbing in that the call for reinscription came not only from the Kanaks, but also from the South Pacific Forum, the regional grouping of thirteen independent countries. That Canada should abstain suggests a disregard for the feelings and wishes of the people and governments of the region and underscores our total lack of policy toward the region.

In its official press release after the vote which explained Canada's abstention, our government representative, Mr. C.V. Svoboda, stated in part:

"...unless a significant body of evidence exists which suggests that the administering government concerned is actively seeking to frustrate or deny self-determination, we have traditionally abstained on resolutions which have sought to force an administering government, against its wishes, to transmit information [to the Decolonization Committee]."

As our readers, and the Canadian government, well know, the South Pacific Forum had been against reinscription at the U.N. except as a last resort. Their preferred option was to pressure France to work toward self-determination through other means. With the change in French government in March 1986, however, and subsequent changes in French policy toward New Caledonia, the Forum decided for reinscription. Part of the Forum Communique (dated 11 August 1986) states:

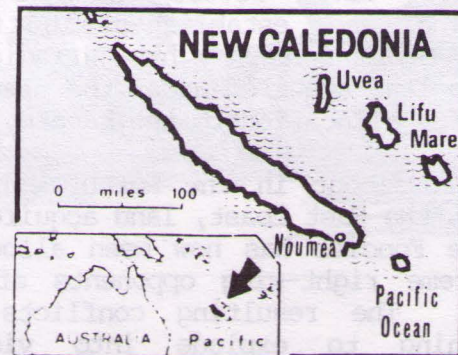
"...[the Forum] noted that whereas the previous [French] Government had appeared committed to a form of independence for New Caledonia, the new government appeared committed to New Caledonia remaining a territory of France."

and

"...[the Forum] concluded that the change in French policy toward New Caledonia over the previous year was significant backward step."

It is also because the South Pacific Forum fears a violent solution to difficulties in New Caledonia that they viewed the U.N. as the last resort for pressure toward peaceful change.

While Canada criticizes the situation in South Africa it does not do likewise in New Caledonia. It seems obvious that Canada did not wish to upset France by voting in favour of reinscription. I continue to be a sad day when Canada remains silent for fear of upsetting a friend. If you can't tell a friend openly that it is wrong, you are certainly not being a responsible friend. Canada's abstention is shameful.





# FRANCE MOVES AGAINST PRO-KANAK SETTLERS

*By David Small*

The October 1 release of the people responsible for the "Hienghene Massacre" has thrown the Kanak independence struggle back into international headlines. Other travesties of justice have not received the same media attention, but are evidence of increasingly aggressive and provocative moves by the French Government and anti-independence forces. The offensive appears to be aimed at settlers (particularly Caldoches) who are sympathetic to the Kanak struggle.

The laws introduced by Bernard Pons, the new Minister of Overseas Territories, are the basic cause of the conflict. Under these new laws, land which was in the process of being returned to Kanak tribes has been re-allocated to anti-independence settlers.

The previous Socialist Party government had established L'Office Foncier, a land office which offered settlers the opportunity of selling their land to the state for re-allocation to Kanaks. (The Noumea building which housed this office was bombed by settlers in the lead-up to last September's regional elections.) It had also created L'ODIL, a state fund for supporting small-scale development projects which was built on an already-functioning programme established in 1975 at the initiative of the UPM, a political party which is now part of the FLNKS.

Bernard Pons wasted no time in halting the land reforms. L'Office Foncier and L'ODIL were scrapped and the Agency for Rural Development and Land Conversion was established in their place. This new agency has jurisdiction over the land acquired under the previous system for allocation to the Kanaks.

In Pouembout in the North West and Moneo on the East Coast, land acquired by L'Office Foncier has now been allocated to extreme right-wing opponents of the Kanaks. The resulting conflicts are threatening to explode into violent confrontation. Car loads of settlers, encouraged by the release of Lapetite and Mithride (the Hienghene killers), fuelled

such fears when they left Noumea for Pouembout and Moneo to join the army in defence of the settlers who have been allocated the disputed land.

The October 17 edition of the FLNKS newspaper, Bwenando, details the series of events which gave rise to the conflict in Pouembout.

The story began on 11 August, 1982, when Gerald Ali Ben Al Hadj, a Caldoche man of Arab descent, advised the High Commissioner in Noumea that his cattle ranch in Pouembout had been occupied by a group of Kanak clans from nearby Oundjo. In line with the land reform policies in force at the time, he offered to sell his land to the state in order for it to be re-allocated to the Kanaks from Oundjo. He advised the Government that after amicable discussions with the Kanaks concerned, he was happy to offer all but the few acres of land surrounding his house for re-allocation.

The state officially took possession of the land on 18 January, 1983 after paying Mr. Hadj 9.5 million francs (CFP). Mr. Hadj was content with this settlement, as he was confident he could pay off the mortgage he still owed on the property with the income he could earn from the land he retained.

When Mr. Hadj pursued the question of re-allocating the land to the Kanaks, however, he was told in a letter from the government person handling the case (Mr. Ferrand) that it was "not an opportune time to act on the question of allocation" of his land because the acquisition act was "still in the process of being formalised". (This had not prevented them from acquiring the land a month earlier.) Mr. Ferrand also pointed out that any re-allocations of land had to be dealt with by the Communal Land Commission and that land in Pouembout did not come under the jurisdiction of that body. Mr. Hadj was, however, given permission to continue "to occupy the property on the condition that he not devalue it in any way."



On January 9, 1984, Mr. Hadj received a further letter from Mr. Ferrand's office advising him that it would not be possible for them to lease him the land he had signed over to them, but offering him the option of leasing land elsewhere. Eventually Mr. Hadj was given permission to stay on the land until 1985.

Eight kilometres of wire fences surrounding the land in question were cut early on the morning of 21 April, 1985. As a result, many of Mr. Hadj's cattle which were grazing on the land disappeared.

A meeting between the Oundjo tribe's Council of Elders and the government's Department of Indigenous Affairs on 16 June 1985 reached agreement that Mr. Hadj's land would be added to the Kanak tribal reserve area of Oundjo. This agreement was reaffirmed by the parties in the presence of Mr. Hadj on 8 May 1986.

The next contact Mr. Hadj had from Mr. Ferrand's office was a letter on September 19 advising him that cattle had been seen on the disputed land. He was advised that the land was not his and that any of his cattle on the land should be removed.

On October 3, the Oundjo Council of Elders wrote directly to the High Commission reminding them of the history of the negotiations and agreements relating to the land. They asked for an official meeting with the High Commissioner to discuss their concerns.

Mr. Hadj has now been served with a court order expelling him from the land. The order is to be implemented by force if he does not cooperate.

Mr. Hadj still refuses to accept the offer of leasing other land. He willingly relinquished ownership of his land on the understanding that it would be returned to his Kanak neighbours. Instead, it has just been announced that the land is to be given to Mr. Orcan, an extremist opponent of the Kanak people.

Orcan developed a reputation in the northern town of Poum of conducting dialogue with Kanaks through the barrel of his gun. His extremist views and actions have even alienated him from other anti-independence settlers in the area. He has been described by some such settlers as "a mercenary and an agent provocateur". They also say that his claim that he needs the land to run his 200 head of cattle is not valid since he only owns 80 beasts.

Bwenando notes that Gerald Ali Ben Ali Hadj now knows what it means to be a member of the U.C. (one of the parties in the FLNKS). The treatment he has received from the French administration has, however, only hardened his resolve to stand in support of the legitimate demands of his Kanak brothers and sisters for justice and freedom.

[Source: Towards Kanaky, newsletter of the Kanak Solidarity Network, Wellington, New Zealand]





## COMPACT AGREEMENTS IMPLEMENTED BY U.S.

The United States has implemented the Compacts of Free Association between itself and the Pacific Trust Territory regions of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia. It has also unilaterally terminated the U.N. Trusteeship agreement between these countries and the United States. At the same time the Northern Mariana Islands have formally become a Commonwealth of the United States.

U.S. unilateral termination of the Trusteeship agreement (except as regards Belau) is seen as a way for the U.S. to avoid criticism by some United Nations members of its handling of the Trusteeship. The U.S. would like to hand the U.N. a "fait accompli" and avoid a Security Council veto of Trusteeship termination.

The U.S. handling of the Compact in both Belau and at the U.N. is reflective of U.S. attempts to avoid embarrassment. The more they try to "sweep issues under the mat", however, the more the U.S. seems to be heavy-handed.

It is instructive that the Congress of the United States approved the Compact signed with Belau on January 10, 1986 on October 16, 1986. This approval by Congress followed a Belau Supreme Court decision in September stating that an agreement (i.e. the January 10 Compact document) did not exist because it was not ratified by the Belauan people on February 21, 1986 [and again on December 2, 1986].

That the U.S. Congress can approve a non-accepted document is a snub at the judicial system of Belau, and is reflective of continued U.S. insensitivity toward the people of Belau.

## COMPACT VOTED DOWN AGAIN IN BELAU

Results of the December 2nd referendum in Belau are:

YES votes - 65%  
NO votes - 35%

While the results are unofficial, President Salii has conceded that his government has yet again failed in its attempt to get the Compact of Free Association agreement between his country and the United States accepted by 75% of Belauans.

This is the seventh time in seven years Belauans have upheld their nuclear free constitution (the world's first and only) against tremendous political and economic pressure by their own government and the United States. The U.S. continues to insist that it requires one-third of the country for military uses, and that to "defend" Belau, it needs to bring nuclear weapons through and into the country.

It is unclear what will happen next in Belau. What is clear however is that Belauans are mistrustful of the promised benefits of the Compact and are weary of the "vote till you get it right" process.

### THE OFFICIAL DATES OF COMPACT IMPLEMENTATION ARE:

- \* with the Marshall Islands:  
October 21, 1986
- \* with the Federated States of  
Micronesia:  
November 3, 1986
- \* The Northern Mariana Islands formally  
became a Commonwealth of the United  
States on November 3, 1986.



# INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS THREATENED WITH EXPULSION

---

A team of independent observers to the December 2 referendum were a bit too "sharp-eyed" for the Belauan government. After noticing questionable election practices, some of the observers were threatened with expulsion by the President via his special assistant.

The following is an on-the-spot statement by the two remaining observers (one a Canadian) phoned to SPPF at 11:00 PM, Victoria time, December 4, 1986.

---

KOROR, PALAU. DECEMBER 5, 1986. 12 NOON.

ELSE HAMMERICH, ELECTED MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (DENMARK) AND DAVID WRIGHT, Q.C. (CANADA), NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF LAWYERS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND CHAIRPERSON OF THE UNITED CHURCH PEACE NETWORK, TORONTO CONFERENCE, THE TWO REMAINING MEMBERS OF THE INDEPENDENT OBSERVER TEAM IN PALAU, RESPOND TO THE STATEMENT OF THE SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO PALAU PRESIDENT SALII, COMPLAINING OF INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL PALAUAN AFFAIRS AND THREATENING THEIR EXPULSION AS FOLLOWS:

We are surprised and saddened that the president, after welcoming our presence, considers our actions in pointing out to the United Nations and Palauan officials procedural and other irregularities in the conduct of the referendum as "interference" in Palauan internal affairs. This term is normally limited to economic or military pressures by another government.

It seems to us that groups or individuals expressing their views on issues anywhere, without economic or military threat, contribute to international understanding and should not be considered as interfering unduly in any country's internal affairs.



The members of the independent observer group in Palau are members of non government organizations concerned with ensuring that the referendum, so important to Palauans and the rest of the world, is carried out fairly without coercion so that the results will truly reflect the sovereign will of the Palauan people, freely expressed in accordance with Palauan law and international standards for the conduct of free and fair elections.

For this reason we have pointed out to U.N. and Palauan officials:

- (1) Improper pressure by officials on government employees.
- (2) Unfair use of government resources to present only one side of the question.
- (3) Closing of schools, directions to teachers to campaign for "yes" votes.
- (4) Ballot boxes missing from central counting place.
- (5) Removal of a security lock from central ballot box storage container.
- (6) Damaged ballot box.
- (7) Changes to alleged agreed upon counting procedures.
- (8) Ballot opening procedures at variance with Palauan law.
- (9) Unsatisfactory voting arrangements in a few voting places.
- (10) Unsatisfactory security arrangements for the transport to Palau of absentee ballots from the United States.

We would remind the president that Palauan citizens have a right to express their views through casting secret ballots free from undue pressure or threats and to have the referendum on the Compact of Free Association conducted in a fair and open manner.

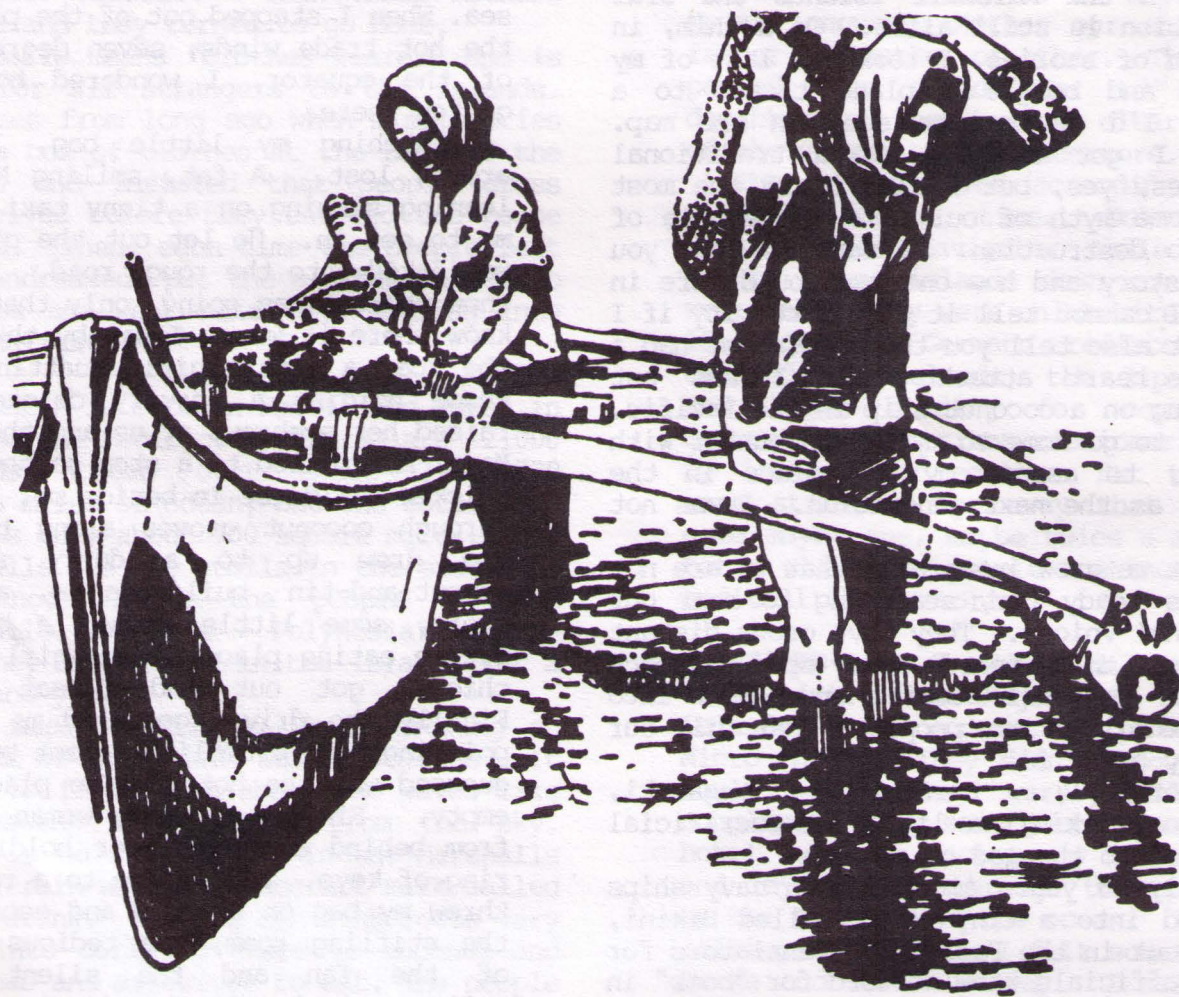
We did not campaign for either a "yes" vote or "no" vote or contribute to the funds for either side. We did not tell any Palauan citizens how to vote. Had there been no irregularities there would have been no so-called "interference".

As citizens of countries which are members of the United Nations we have responsibilities to ensure proper procedures are followed in U.N. matters . [Palau forms part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific, which comes under responsibility of the U.N. Security Council, and has been administered by the United States since WW II .]



We understand the president has indicated the referendum was the best carried out to date. We are surprised that a leader of a democratic country would be so concerned about public statements of fully/independent observers /visible that he would threaten them with expulsion. We cannot accept the implied proposition that the world must remain silent when governments interfere with internationally recognized rights of their citizens.

The president's suggestion that unless we cease voicing our concerns we will be asked to leave the country is hardly in accordance with the image of a " free and open country ". We have been made to feel most welcome by the many Palauans we have met and in no way do we believe we have " abused " the welcome.





# ISLAND SACRIFICES

By Kim Echlin

The people of the Marshall Islands still tell stories of the time the bombs fell on their South Pacific paradise.

It comes, it goes, that is how all Majal stories begin. Long, long ago there wasn't any land at all, only ocean and the god Iowa looked down through a hole in the clouds and said, mmmmmmmmm, and all the islands appeared.

IT BEGAN one hot afternoon in a tiny art gallery on the north coast of Oahu. I was talking to a young artist who told me that in the Marshall Islands the oral tradition is still alive. On a whim, in search of stories, I took the last of my money and bought a plane ticket to a place I'd never even seen on the map. Once I got there I heard traditional stories, yes, but I also heard the most fearsome myth of our time - the tale of atomic destruction. I want to tell you this story and how one man found life in it. I cannot tell it with integrity if I do not also tell you that my father had a fatal heart attack while I was out sailing on a coconut ship in the Pacific. I had to go home to my own encounter with death, to assume my new place in the world as the next generation. I was not ready.

But we grow into roles that we are not always ready for, searching to hear our internal voices. They have grown distant and seek to be heard. They spin out each of our personal stories and weave into the memory of our people. What will our memory be?

Chernobyl, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Muroroa, Bikini: a litany of sacrificial temples to the god of our age.

Only 40 years ago American navy ships sailed into a tiny atoll called Bikini, away out in the Pacific. Translators for navy officials knew no word for "bomb" in the Majal language so they told the islanders that they had a powerful new god they wanted to bring to the island. That is how the testing began. It comes, it goes.

THE flight from Honolulu to Majuro, district centre of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, takes only five hours but the plane flies westward and crosses the International dateline into tomorrow. Looking down through the thick, damp windows of the small airplane, all I could see were whitecaps rolling over the ocean for thousands and thousands of sea miles, not a ship or island in sight, only endless rolling ocean.

As the plane descended I saw a string of tiny islands curved round a blue lagoon. We circled and plunged for the landing, coasting close over the surface of the waves as if we would dive into the sea. When I stepped out of the plane into the hot trade winds, seven degrees north of the equator, I wondered how I had gotten there.

Clutching my little bag, I looked around lost. A fat, smiling Majal man leaning smoking on a tinny taxi gestured me to get in. He let out the clutch and we jerked onto the rough road. I did not know where I was going, only that he must know where it was. I saw by the side of the road a little girl squatting in the shade holding a scruffy chicken. She raised her eyebrows at us and the smiling Majal man pulled to a stop so she and the chicken could get in beside me. We drove through coconut groves along the beach and drew up to a dusty strip of cement-and-tin buildings - a supply store, some little shops, a bank, two little eating places. The girl with the chicken got out and I sat waiting. Finally the driver gestured me out too, pointing to a crumbling cement building I guessed was the hotel. The place seemed empty. Finally a young woman came out from behind a closed door holding a big ring of keys. She led me to a room and I threw my bag on the bed and escaped from the stifling room, the tedious whirling of the fan and the silent peeling wallpaper back onto the street.

The day I arrived was a Sunday and wandering along a road near the ocean I heard the thin nasal warble of Christian hymns. A cluster of white gravestones shone bright in the hot sunlight against



the blues of sea and sky and I slipped into the back of the church. Everyone smelled good there together, warm and flowery, their hair rubbed shining with coconut oil and hibiscus, men on one side, women on the other, little children sitting in white and flowers in front of the preacher dressed in a flowing white gown behind the altar. Their voices warbled praise for a baby born under a star and at the end the preacher strode down the centre aisle and the congregation tumbled out behind him like a wave, everyone gathering round to ring the church bell. I followed and, standing just outside their circle, I too looked at the bell. It was an old torpedo hung upside down and fixed inside with a clapper.

The preacher rang the torpedo and the ringing floated away in the howling trades over the ocean. Then everyone drifted off. I left too and a group of smiling children ran after me shouting, "Riballe! Riballe!" Then their mothers called and they turned to go home.

Riballe means "clothes wearer" and is used for all strangers to the islands. It comes from long ago when missionaries kept a box of clothes at the back of the church and insisted that people dress themselves before they entered the house of God. Then, each time the people left they undressed, put the clothes back into the box and went naked and smiling into the sunlight.

MICRONESIA is between Hawaii and Japan in the north Pacific. There are 2,000 islands spread over about 3,000,000 square miles of ocean, but the total land area is only about 700 square miles. The Marshalls are the atolls to the east. No one knows where the people of the Marshalls came from - Polynesia? Asia? - but they have lived in the islands for a thousand years.

An atoll is living coral growing on the rim of an ancient sunken volcano. It seems to float just above the waves like a crescent moon fallen from the sky. There is no fresh water in the Marshalls - only rain water and coconut milk called ni to drink. Nothing can sink roots very deep into coral so there is coconut and pandanus and arrowroot to eat. The people are as at home on the shifting ocean as on these tiny bits of land. On outrigger canoes they learned to sail thousands of miles, navigating by the stars and a complex knowledge of wave patterns. Little boys sat at the feet of ancient

navigators deep into the night memorizing the turning sky. During the day, the old men dropped the children into the ocean and taught them to feel the movement of the waves on their skin. They set pairs of water in the canoe and taught them to watch the ripples on the surface. Waves coming from the east are called buntokrear and waves crossing are called kalibtak. The old men tie twigs together with shells to make elaborate maps marking the wave patterns and islands. They point out the birds - that one near land, that one is an ocean bird who flies out over the sea. The sacred navigator holds the memory of the people and wears a thousand details of the ocean like a bracelet in his mind.

The precious beads of land belonged to the women. Women gathered coconut and dug arrowroot and cooked in deep earthen ovens. They cut pandanus from the trees and twisted and sucked its juices through their teeth. Everything was given from the mother. There is an expression in Majal language: Mother our only mother, father and father of other. The land was passed from grandmother to mother to daughter and they kept it clear and swept of the graves of the ancestors.

The people lived according to their ways for a long time. But in 1825 Russian circumnavigator called Kotzebue marked these islands down on a map and wrote that they were uninhabited. In the 19th century Germans rediscovered and claimed the islands, the Japanese came and began trading for copra, dried coconut, and American missionaries sailed by looking for souls. But the atolls were still so far away that the ships came maybe once, maybe twice a season and for a while the people continued to fish and tell their stories.

I LEARNED that for three dollars a day I could sail from Majuro to the outer islands on a coconut ship called the Micro-Chief. They didn't know when she would sail, they were still loading supplies. They said just to wait at the hotel. I went back to my bed that night and lay looking through the open window at the stars above the ocean. I was just falling asleep when I felt something jump on me and scramble away. I sat straight up in the darkness. There was nothing between inside and outside. Two green eyes blinked at me from the corner of the room. A cat had jumped through the window.



When people don't understand powerful phenomena they infuse them with supernatural powers.

After Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the first Pacific tests, the American popular imagination seized the image of nuclear power and began to transform it. In New York enterprising minds decided to paint crucifixes with radium paints so they'd glow in the dark. The girls in the factory painted their own teeth so they would glow in the dark too. In Tennessee, scientists amused themselves by making golf balls with a cobalt 60 core, then blindfolding the caddie and making him find the balls with a geiger counter. A revealing bathing suit was called the bikini because the effect of the flesh it bared was comparable to the effect of nuclear blasts on the Pacific atoll. Spike Blandy, commander of the first Bikini Island test shot, threw a celebration at the Army War College Officers' Club in 1946 and was photographed with his wife for the Washington Post society page. They are cutting a huge cake of angel food puffs molded into the shape of a mushroom cloud.

Newspaper reports of the Bikini testing hailed the event with the optimism and reverence usually reserved for a saviour. War-weary Americans perceived the weapon as their hope against more war, more suffering, more loss. For many the bomb was apocalyptic power, beyond their understanding. The bomb became distant and godly. No one was responsible for it.

WHEN the Americans arrived at Bikini in 1946 to begin their 12-year testing program, the first job was to move the islanders. They brought in Navy DUKW boats that had the jaws of sharks painted on the bow and could sail right up on the shore. The commodore ordered helicopters and there were crews of scientists and filmmakers to record the event.

It took only 10 days to arrange the move. The people loaded supplies onto the navy ships and in the evenings they went aboard to watch Roy Rogers and Mickey Mouse projected on the afterdeck of the navy ship Sumner. They had never seen movies or typewriters or microphones before. The day of departure the Bikini people conducted a ceremony at the graveyard to honour the ancestors. They cleaned the headstones and decorated them with flowers, they sang and promised they

would return. The navy asked permission to film the ceremony. The crew had trouble with the sound equipment and asked the people to do the ceremony again in order to get a better take. Then everyone gathered up the last of their things, got on the Navy ships and sailed away. Before it was over, the American testing agenda would span 12 years with 60 announced atomic and hydrogen tests. The Bikini people would never go home.

IT SEEMED an eternity waiting for the Micro-Chief to sail. I walked the length of the atoll once a day. I swam. I slept. My ship didn't leave on Tuesday or Wednesday or Thursday. In the islands you wait for shipments, wait for winds, wait for currents. There are a thousand things to wait for but I was restless and impatient. I didn't know how to wait.

I met a man who had just returned from the outer islands where he had been taping peoples' accounts of the nuclear testing. The worst test was in 1954. It was called Bravo, a 15-megaton hydrogen surface detonation that shot a fireball of intense heat up at a rate of 300 miles per hour, 100-mile-an-hour winds at the edge rocking Bikini's quiet lagoon like a typhoon. Winds carried the radioactive cloud over Ailinginae, Ailuk, Bikar, Likiep, Rongelap, Rongerik, Taka, Wotho, Utirik, Jemo and Mejit, all inhabited islands, some as far as 275 miles to the east. A Japanese fishing boat called the Lucky Dragon was also in the area. Some of the Majal people thought the white ash fallout was mosquito poison and collected it in their rain barrels. The fish turned yellow and everyone began to get sick. Two days later Navy officials evacuated them. Sitting in the shade of a palm tree, I listened to their stories on the tape recorder. The first one was told by a middle-aged woman and in the background we could hear the rushing ocean and the roar of the island generator and children playing and laughing.

I was on Rongelap in 1954 and heard the explosion and saw the sky turn red. During this time I was cooking food for the children - it was still dark and the whole sky changed colour. Later something fell down on us, like white rain, and made the water in the wells turn yellow. The next day an airplane came to check our island and then the next day a ship arrived



to take us away.

When we arrived on Kwajalein we started getting burns all over our bodies and people were feeling dizzy and weak. At the time we did not know if we would ever return to Rongelap and we were afraid. After two days something appeared under my fingernails and then my fingernails came off and my fingers bled. We all had burns on our ears, shoulders, necks and feet, and our eyes were very sore.

There were many problems with the women and many forms of jibun - miscarriage. We gave birth to jellyfish babies. My older sister had a baby like a crab and another woman had a baby with no arms. Another woman had a baby without a skull. We were afraid to feed them. We were afraid the white rain was in our breasts and milk.

I was afraid to return to Rongelap in 1957 but they said it was safe, only don't eat the coconut crab. When we ate the arrowroot it burned our mouths and everything we were used to eating had changed colour. We did not understand at that time what the poison was...

On and on that afternoon we listened to the voices of people telling their stories. The sun was getting low in the sky and someone came by and told me the Micro-Chief would sail in a few hours time. After all my waiting I felt suddenly afraid to go. I did not want to leave the island. I did not want to sail out alone upon the ocean.

THE Micro-Chief sailed out of the lagoon under a full moon. I stood on deck amidst all the bundles and chickens and copra sacks and watched until the land disappeared. We chugged out into the open sea.

Every morning I got up early and went up on deck to watch where the ocean meets the sky. On mornings when we reached an island I would stand on the first deck watching the sailors unpack the hold with a crane. They like to flex their shining arms and grin up at me. The wealthy islands took lots of supplies - tinned food, Coca-Cola, clothing - but the small ones took only a few cardboard boxes - sailcloth, nails, marine paint. These

small islands sent back large burlap sacks of dried coconut to trade for money.

Twenty days at sea. Thirty days at sea. On board ship there was nothing to do. The whole world looked blue. The Majal people have a word for something like crazy that means "too much sky in your head." When we anchored at an atoll I went ashore. The sailors held the flat-bottomed punt for me, It is called a boom-boom for the sound it makes slapping on the waves. I jumped down from the deck onto the supplies and rode over the reefs to the sandy coast. Every chance I got I walked the small islands and watched the people working and resting in the shade of their low thatch huts, cooking in deep earth ovens, rubbing their white canoes and cleaning their fish. It was a strange pleasure to be there in that world so strange to me - sky and winds and sea.

The children follow me, calling, Riballe! Riballe! Once I went swimming and got stung by a blue jellyfish. The children all laughed because everyone knew it was the wrong season for swimming; it was jellyfish season. My legs were red and swollen with poison and a child scrambled up a palm tree and brought me down a coconut to drink. Neibor, a Majal woman from the ship, came over and I asked her what the children were giggling and chattering about. She said, "They are just discussing that the best cure for jellyfish sting is to pee on it, but no one has the courage to offer."

On the smallest islands the people are still curious about riballe but on most islands the people are accustomed to strangers. Many Majal people were, for 22 years, the subject of an Atomic Energy Commission study. Twice a year scientists and doctors from the Brookhaven Institute visited the contaminated people, testing them with machines, collecting their urine, finding thyroid conditions, leukemia, miscarriages and deformed babies, physical and mental disorders. The Majal people provided invaluable data on the effect of radiation poisoning. The Brookhaven study, a thick document of scientific language, is a masterpiece of prose that reports and disclaims at the same time.



ONE morning aboard the Micro-Chief I noticed that the sun rose on the other side of the ship. We were circling back to an island called Ebon and then to Kili in the north. The Majal woman, Neibor, was going home to Ebon to see her mother. Neibor had been to school in America and had not been home for four years. We walk the deck in the evenings arm in arm and the last night before we reach Ebon we make a feast. We eat crab and drink soda and suck pandanus and even open a tin of oranges. But it's stifling in the cabin below so we go out on deck and see an old, old man called LaKebol. I have seen LaKebol squatting there on the deck for many days, always watching the horizon. Neibor tells me he was a great navigator.

As we walk by she begins to talk to him and we squat down. They start telling stories. Neibor has learned lots of jokes in the States and she likes a song about a ding-a-ling. The old man laughs and tells us a Majal story about Edao. Edao is a funny one, always sailing around, tricking people just to laugh, creating new things. They say that Edao made the atoll Majuro. He tricked a powerful irooj into trading away his fastest outrigger for a heavy old koa boat that wouldn't float and when they started to chase him he threw Majuro in the way. Old LaKebol told lots of stories that night.

You know, along time ago people didn't have necks...until the day Edao thought he'd like to trick an irooj and turned himself into a coconut tree. The irooj wandered by looking for a drink and stuck his head into the hollow of the tree to get some rain water, but the hole was really Edao's ass! Snap! Edao squeezed it shut and the irooj had to pull and pull until he got a long, long neck. Finally Edao let go and ran away. That's why we have necks, you know.

After that night I went and squatted beside LaKebol almost every evening. I learned to wait. We'd watch the sun go down and the stars rise and he told me many, many things those long nights on deck. He told me how the world began and where the sunrise came from, about demons who run on the reefs at night and great sea expeditions led by his father, about

drifting lost and thirsty on the ocean until the navigator finds the right waves.

I close my eyes now and see the glow of the starboard light tracing shadows where the wind and sun had carved deep creases into his old face. I see the sparkle of his eyes under the stars.

I asked LaKebol about the first foreigner on his island and he said, "I do not know about first, but first I saw was when I was one small boy and those men of Japan were fighting those men of America. One man of Japan on our island heard they lost their war and he crawled under a coconut stump, took off his boot and with his own toe shot himself through his head. Jij!!"

AFTER the Second World War was over and the Marshall Islands were officially an American protectorate, the nuclear testing began.

WHEN questioned about the ethics of nuclear testing in the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific, Henry Kissinger commented, "There are only 90,000 people out there - who gives a damn!"

THE Micro-Chief's hold was almost empty. We had sailed the southern route: Jabwot, Ailinglaplap, Namorik, Jaluit, Mili, Ebon. Our last stop was Kili.

Kili is different from every other place we visited. It is an island, not an atoll, and it has no lagoon. Without a lagoon the people cannot sail and cannot fish because the waters are deep and wild. It is difficult to get supplies in and out of Kili because the waves are rough. In the past the supply ship has often had to sail by without stopping and Kili people have had to wait.

We anchor well off the island and an electric tension passes through the sailors on the Micro-Chief. They don't flirt and flex their arms. They say the island is inhabited by bad spirits. A few years ago a captain on another coconut ship lost his leg in an outboard motor when they capsized trying to get the boom-boom into Kili. Who could live in such a place?



Kili has traditionally been uninhabited, but when the Americans discovered that the Bikini people could not go back to their contaminated island they moved them here. All the other land was taken and the Bikini people did not need to fish or sail because they had lots of compensation money. They did not want to settle anywhere because they wanted to go home, to their atoll, to the graves of their ancestors.

We stay only a few hours at Kili because the waves are coming up. Kili people live in American-made tin houses and negotiate for money. Compensation to the ex-Bikini people who now live on Kili is in the millions of dollars. At one time there was a projected six-year resettlement program that was to cost \$3,000,000. By 1969 the islands were cleared of nuclear test debris and scrub vegetation. The top two inches of Bikini's topsoil were removed and pandanus trees planted. But radioactivity was in the food chain, particularly in one of the staples, the coconut crab. The project was abandoned.

I stop in a little restaurant for a drink and ask for ni, coconut milk. A laughing man pats his belly and says, "We too fat to go up coconut tree. You drink Coca?"

We are hurried back to the Micro-Chief. There is still one load of supplies the sailors couldn't get to shore in time. The men try to swing the boxes down to the boom-booms heaving on the waves. We stand helplessly on deck watching the sea grow wild and high. The Bikini people stand helplessly on Kili shore watching the battle. The captain decides it is too dangerous. They put the supplies back in the hold, pull up anchor and slowly chug northward toward Majuro. Another supply ship will bring back the boxes in six months. I stand on the deck a long time watching Kili disappear into the waves.

That night I go and squat beside La Kebol. He says he must live where he can sail. That night was the last night he told me stories. He told me the story of his people.

My father lived one long life. In his day they said on Bikini that our spirit Librojka always protect our island from all other powerful demon. When those men of America came they told us they are bringing one big demon. In those days we have no word for bomb. But we know Librojka is most powerful and will kill all demon so we say, "All right! Stop talking, we will move."

But we never go home. We move first to one island, not enough coconut, then another island, not enough room, then Kili, no lagoon for fishing.

And I say, enough! Enough drifting lost at sea and I sail back alone to Bikini to see what happened there. I sail alone and find our island and our graves all fallen over. The graves have not been swept. Our coconut trees have doubled heads and big ships of America lie rusting in our lagoon. I walk and walk and find the west side of Bikini gone. My home is disappeared into the sky, my mother's land and my wife's land all gone, no land to bury me, no land to return to after sailing, no land to call my home.

My people are lost at sea and they have taken down their sail. They drift and they've given up. They no longer look for their island. All right! Some say America will pay them more money so they don't work but wait for pay. Some say they are sick from poison so they don't make life but wait to die. My people have lost all happiness to sail. And no one say, "All right! Enough of this drifting westward. Let us tack back and see what we find."

IT COMES, it goes.

The Micro-Chief sailed back to Majuro and a message waiting for me. I left those islands as suddenly as I'd arrived carrying away a thousand stories. Majal tradition they always see you off. They say, "Ships come and go but sometimes people never come back."



I do not know where I am going where I have been, only I remember my father sent me off, go, go, be free, then stood shoulders rounded wistful smile waving god be with you au revoir, caught behind thick panes of airport glass.

So those people of Majuro took me to the airport and put flowers round my neck. In the old days they used to tie young coconut leaves to the mast of the ship and wade around the outrigger chanting to the god of navigation. I turn to say goodbye in the forever parting moment, not knowing if I will ever feel the other again. Loktanur rising. Night stars and sea winds speaking all.

[Reprinted with permission from The Canadian Forum and with permission of the author. This article appeared in the August/September 1986 edition of The Canadian Forum. At the time of writing Kim Echlin taught at York University. She now works with "The Journal" at CBC TV.]

## EYES OF FIRE

A book review by Keith Ovenden from N.Z. Listener, October 25, 1986

**EYES OF FIRE:** The Last Voyage of the Rainbow Warrior by David Robie (Lindon Publishing, \$19.95).

David Robie's scoop was to have sailed on the Rainbow Warrior across the Pacific and to have taken part in the evacuation of the Rongelap islanders to Mejato in the Kwajalein atoll. The Sunday Times Insight team may have had exclusive access to the Greenpeace files, but Robie has written a better book on Greenpeace and its objectives. His treatment of super-power militarisation of the Pacific is more objective than Shears and Gidley's. And his pictures are better than everybody else's. Robie wears his colours openly (some of the profits from his book are going back to the people of Mejato) and he is less than candid in places, but this is the book to read if you are more interested in Greenpeace in the Pacific than in the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior.

## — NUCLEAR EXODUS — A NEW SHORT FILM FROM NEW ZEALAND

NUCLEAR EXODUS is a damning indictment of the legacy of nuclear testing in the Pacific, particularly by the United States. The documentary tells the tragic story of the contamination by radioactive fallout of the people of Rongelap Atoll in the Marshall Islands during 1954 and their evacuation three decades later by the Greenpeace flagship, Rainbow Warrior. It includes the sabotage of the peace ship on 10 July 1985 by secret agents in a bizarre bid to defend French nuclear testing in the Pacific.

The documentary accuses the United States government of turning the islanders into a control group, human guinea pigs, to test the effects of radioactive fallout. It portrays the agony of the people's last days on their atoll.

Subtitled THE EVACUATION OF RONGELAP, the film was inspired by the photographic exhibition "Nuclear Exodus: The Rainbow Warrior's Last Mission" during a peace festival at the Tauhara Centre near Taupo, New Zealand in early 1986. Original music was composed by Kevin Watson. The script was written by David Robie, author of Eyes of Fire, which vividly describes the evacuation.

Made primarily as an educational film, NUCLEAR EXODUS is 12 minutes long and is ideal for school use. An American NTSC VHS video version is available. Cost is \$NZ50 plus postage. Order from: Aroha Productions, P.O. Box 8371, Symonds St., Auckland, New Zealand. [NOTE: SPPF has ordered a copy of this video. Write to us for rental details.]



# THE CONTROVERSY CONTINUES

Dennis O'Rourke's powerful film, HALF LIFE, continues to generate controversy. The award winning film by this noted Australian film maker exposes the story of America's largest H-bomb test at Bikini Atoll, contamination of Marshall Islanders and the ensuing U.S. cover-up. According to the Marshall Island Journal, the film "shatters forever the myths created by the U.S. government to hide the facts and pulls no punches as it presents the stark reality of health problems that affect Marshallese today".

It is not surprising then that a showing of HALF LIFE in Port Moresby, PNG, in August brought about a 2 page U.S. Embassy press release calling HALF LIFE "half-truth", and forwarding the U.S. position (again) that they did not aim to use Marshallese as guinea pigs and did not know radiation would travel to inhabited islands.

The following is a letter to the editor of The Times of Papua New Guinea by film maker O'Rourke in response to the U.S. Embassy statement:

The comments on my film HALF LIFE, made by the United States Embassy and published in your newspaper last week, deserve a response.

US government officials, who have carefully scrutinised HALF LIFE (indeed, I provided them with the film), would know that it never (to quote from the Embassy's statement) "...erroneously concludes that the United States used the people of the Marshall Islands as guinea pigs". What it does is to chronicle the series of events and decisions which have led to the inescapable tragedy which now haunts the Marshallese people.

The expression 'guinea pigs' is included in my film because it is spoken by Marshall Islanders, who reached the conclusion long before I made HALF LIFE. The fact that people of many countries, including the United States, who see the film, do conclude that the islanders have been used as 'guinea pigs', is something about which the US government could ponder.

HALF LIFE, through the use of several official films and documents, reveals facts about the 'Bravo' event which were previously not publicly-known; it exposes the cynical and racially-motivated manipulation of the Marshallese people by the US Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and military officials; but it does not "erroneously conclude" anything.

I have arrived at a personal conclusion of sorts. It is that: over a period of more than thirty years, decisions have been made to deliberately and knowingly allow the Marshallese people to be exposed to harmful levels of radiation.

The Marshall Islanders, as trustees of America, were neither informed nor consulted about these decisions. The same decisions would not have been made if they involved American citizens.

The embassy states: "The United States never, repeat never planned to use the inhabitants for scientific study...".

What about the AEC report on the medical condition of the exposed people, three years after 'Bravo' (quoted in HALF LIFE) which states: "The habitation of these people on the island will afford most valuable ecological radiation data on human beings."

Every year since 1954, doctors and scientists, all with AEC funding, have travelled from the US to the Marshall Islands as part of an official study of the exposed people. They persist in down-playing the effects of radiation and its future risks. Every prediction and every reassurance given by the US authorities has been later shown, after independent study, to be false.

The medical personnel who were flown out to the Marshall Islands immediately after 'Bravo' were, in the main, military and AEC doctors whose field of study was the effects of radiation on human organisms. They came to treat (and study) the exposed people under conditions of absolute secrecy.



'Bravo' was deliberately constructed to create the maximum amount of fallout. There were fallout-monitoring devices downwind from Bikini for hundreds of miles past Rongelap.

The embassy states that the prediction was for a "five to seven megaton yield".

That means a bomb with the destructive force equal to more than five hundred Hiroshimas. The reality was that, above five megatons, the scientists could not accurately predict how large it would be. They did know that 'Bravo' would be the largest and 'dirtiest' (i.e. most radioactive) bomb ever exploded on the surface of this planet. And they did know that the immediate fallout would travel for hundreds of miles (earlier, much smaller, tests in Nevada and the Marshall Islands, had confirmed this).

If the authorities anticipated "no physical danger to American personnel or inhabitants", why were the ships of the task-force equipped with "washdown counter-measures", which would protect their crews from fallout?

The US Air Force weathermen who were on Rongerik Atoll, and who were interviewed in HALF LIFE, state that the winds to 100,000 feet were blowing steadily towards the inhabited islands. Documents available to me clearly indicate that the winds up to the 55,000 feet level were blowing in the direction of Rongelap. For a bomb expected to have the force more than five hundred times the bomb which obliterated the city (and the inhabitants) of Hiroshima, no wind would be "...so light that no fallout was expected...".

The embassy statement goes on to claim that: "As soon as the hazardous levels of contamination were confirmed, evacuation plans were set in motion...".

The fact is that a US Navy destroyer-class ship, the USS Gypsy, was stationed at the very entrance to Rongelap lagoon, during the day of the test. Its crew were protected from the fallout by virtue of their training and the "washdown counter-measures". They monitored the levels of radiation which were being experienced by the unsuspecting and uninformed islanders and then, instead of evacuating them, as they

could have done, with minimal danger to themselves, they sailed away, leaving the islanders to receive the cumulative dose of radiation which is killing them today.

HALF LIFE "could have used contemporary US spokespersons to explain that the US has done no nuclear testing in the Pacific for almost a quarter of a century...". It could have also made reference to the continuing attempts by the US government to deny the people of Belau the right to enforce a nuclear-free constitution; and the continuing dislocation of the lives of the Marshall Islanders from Kwajalein Atoll (where the US is testing its SDI project weapons).

It did neither. All it does is to tell a little bit of grim history. And those who ignore (or seek to falsify) history are bound to repeat it.

America is a good society, Americans are good people. From the perspective of the people of this region, America is an all-powerful society. It is not an all-perfect society; it was not in 1954, and it is not in 1986.

Unlike the Soviet Union, where a film such as HALF LIFE could never be made, in America, and in Papua New Guinea, people cherish the right to freedom of expression and honest critical debate.

The US embassy statement, as published by you, carried the title: "Half-Life is half-truth". May I suggest that 'half truth' is a description which best fits the US government's disclosures about the events surrounding 'Bravo', from 1954 until the present.

As a final comment, I quote from the AEC report of February, 1955: "If we had not conducted the fullscale thermonuclear tests ('Bravo') mentioned above, we would have been in ignorance of the extent of radioactive fall-out and therefore we would have been much more vulnerable to the dangers from fall-out in the event an enemy should resort to radiological warfare (my emphasis) against us."

Dennis O'Rourke.

Dennis O'Rourke



# SOVEREIGNTY REGAINED

*By Gillian Southey*

Vanuatu is a chain of 70 islands about 500 miles west of Fiji, in Melanesia. Almost 90% of land is contained on 10 islands. The population is approximately 100,000 and about 20% live in two main urban areas. Traditionally, the economy is one of subsistence agriculture. After the colonial settlement cash crops have been grown (mainly copra), and recently tourism has increased.

Independence was proclaimed July 30 1980; Father Walter Lini became Prime Minister and Ati George Sokomanu the President. Britain and France had jointly ruled for 74 years under the Condominium (popularly known as "Pandemonium"). Effectively what happened was that there were three administrations: the French, the British and a joint one, which provided triplicate services and much confusion.

Initially, British missionaries had settled in what was then known as the New Hebrides. In the 1880s, the British government declined to establish protection until the French proposed the placement of a penal colony, and at that time, the two governments began talks. Finally, a convention was signed in 1906.

In the early 1970s, Father Walter Lini, who returned from theological study in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and others, set up the Hebrides National Party. It was later renamed Vanuaaku Pati, "vanuaaku" meaning "my land." Gradually the movement became more widespread. Lini visited the United Nations in 1974 and gained support from the Decolonization Committee. The Committee put international pressure on the British and French to begin decolonizing and to establish "universal adult suffrage" which would give the Melanesians unrestricted voting rights.

However, the colonizers were reluctant to give up power. Many talks followed and for six months, ending in May 1978, the Vanuaaku Pati set up the "People's Provisional Government" in protest of the proposed composition of the Representative Assembly and the voting requirements. Finally, with

election reforms, the Vanuaaku Pati received a majority vote in 1979.

Not all "ni-Vanuatu" (indigenous people) wanted to see such an end to the Condominium. On the island of Santo, Jimmy Stevens and the Nagriamel movement, a rural group, rebelled. Nagriamel had started as an independent movement in response to increased foreign land acquisition and development. They advocated a return to traditional ways or "custom". However, in Stevens determination to promote his own movement, the Nagriamel was used by both French and American interests seeking to overthrow the Vanuaaku Pati's mandate. This remained the most significant opposition providing the base for a number of uprisings before and after independence, particularly on the islands of Santo and Tanna. Little bloodshed occurred and the government passed to the Vanuaaku Pati relatively peacefully.

It was not until ten days before independence was declared, in the midst of heavy discussion, that the French agreed to independence, and it is the French-influenced opposition which was the most significant.

Currently, the ni-Vanuatu are running their own land and are working toward economic independence. After initial assistance from the UN they now direct their own fisheries. Vanuatu is not without its problems, but the difference is that now the people of the land can choose how to deal with them. It is an independent, nuclear-free [ed. note: by legislation, not by constitution], non-aligned nation, determined to leave behind its colonial past.

In the words of Walter Lini on the day of independence: "The future of Vanuatu is bright and it is important that we should be allowed to develop in the Melanesian way on our own."

[Gillian Southey is a New Zealander now living in Portland, Oregon. This article is from ASIAN-PACIFIC ISSUES NEWS (August 1986), a publication of the American Friends Service Committee in Portland.]



# Saving The South Pacific

By John Burgess

TOKYO — After five years of negotiations, officials from 16 countries, including the United States, New Zealand and France, have reached agreement on a treaty to protect the environment in the vast South Pacific.

The treaty does not essentially affect the status quo on the divisive issues of nuclear weapons and waste. France would be allowed to continue its controversial nuclear testing at the Mururoa atoll, but the region would remain free of dumping or storage of radioactive waste.

Efforts by neighboring states to stop the French explosions would not end, however. Antinuclear governments are continuing that battle with a separate treaty aimed at establishing the South Pacific as a

nuclear-free zone.

The treaty was hailed here as an unprecedented piece of cooperation in a region emotionally torn by the nuclear question. "It commits the governments and the independent states to prevent, reduce and control pollution in the South Pacific area," said William H. Mansfield, deputy executive director of the U.N. Environmental Program (UNEP), which sponsored the negotiations.

The treaty was approved by delegates meeting on the French-ruled island of New Caledonia. It will go into effect after formal ratification by 10 of the 16 countries present.

The treaty will cover millions of square miles of ocean and islands stretching from Papua New Guin-

ea in the west to Pitcairn Island in the east. Despite the region's image as paradise on earth, many of the islands suffer from standard environmental ills of the modern age, such as reef damage, shore erosion and toxic pollution.

The treaty sets up a "blacklist" of substances that cannot be put into the ocean under any circumstances, such as mercury, certain plastics and oil. Other substances, such as nickel, lead and arsenic, could be dumped with special permission.

Some countries sought to insert language barring nuclear testing and passage of ships carrying nuclear weapons. However, they later relented. Dr. Stjepan Keckes, the UNEP scientist in charge of sea and coastal programs, told

reporters that such questions were recognized as essentially military and political, not environmental ones. "We try to be realistic," he said.

Under the treaty, nuclear testing is specifically allowed, with the proviso that the country doing it "shall take all appropriate measures to prevent, reduce and control pollution." Currently, there is no dumping of nuclear waste in the South Pacific. But countries there have long worried that it would be a logical site in future years, due to its isolation and low population. The treaty bans any future dumping, which Keckes said constituted a concession by France and the United States.

Legal efforts against nuclear

weapons are now focused on the separate nuclear-free zone treaty adopted in 1984 by the South Pacific Forum, which groups Australia, New Zealand, nine island nations and two semi-independent states. The treaty has not yet gone into force formally, as it has not been ratified by the required number of countries.

The treaty bans testing and possession of nuclear weapons in the region but leaves international waters open to ships transiting with nuclear weapons aboard. It remains of largely symbolic importance, however, because France has refused to sign a protocol pledging to respect it and continues its testing. The United States, meanwhile, has yet to say whether it will sign.

Manchester Guardian: Vol 135 No 23 Dec 7/86 p 18

## ... BUT NUCLEAR WASTES STILL ALLOWED: an editorial note

The above upbeat article states "the treaty bans any future dumping (of nuclear wastes)". According to an item on the treaty in the December 1, 1986 Washington Pacific Report: "there was agreement to a ban on the dumping of nuclear wastes within signatories' 200 mile exclusive economic zones (EEZs) and the so-called open seas "enclaves" which are areas completely surrounded by EEZs". It seems to us that the area slated for possible Japanese nuclear waste dumping (south of Japan and north of the Northern Marianas) would not fall under the definition of an "enclave", thus leaving

it open - under the treaty - for Japan to go ahead with her plans.

In the Manchester Guardian article above it is not clear that dumping on the land is banned. Does the treaty refer only to the ocean? Under the recently passed (partial) nuclear free zone treaty, nuclear dumping on land is allowed, though not explicitly.

It seems to us that the nuclear power (i.e. waste-laden) countries still have their major dumping options left open in the Pacific.



# AMNESTY COMMENTS ON WEST PAPUA (Irian Jaya)

Amnesty International is concerned at reports that alleged members or supporters of a separatist movement in Irian Jaya who sought refuge or were arrested across the border in Papua New Guinea and who were subsequently deported may have been tortured or killed in custody by Indonesian security officials. The reports raise fears that other deportees may become victims of torture, extrajudicial executions or "disappearances".

Irian Jaya is the easternmost province of Indonesia and comprises the western half of the island of New Guinea. Once a part of the Netherlands East Indies, it was ceded by Holland to Indonesia in 1962 and a United Nations supervised, but reportedly much disputed, "Act of Free Choice" took place in 1969 to determine whether the indigenous population wanted independence or integration with Indonesia. Despite the UN representative's conclusion that voters had decided in favor of integration, there has been scattered resistance to the Indonesian administration ever since, some of it organized in the Free Papua Movement (Organisasi Papua Merdeka or OPM), much of it not. Recent development initiatives by the Indonesian government, especially a transmigration program to move people from the overpopulated island of Java to more sparsely settled areas, have reportedly increased support for the resistance.

An alleged abortive uprising by members of the OPM in February 1984 and subsequent operations by the Indonesian military led to the exodus of more than 10,000 people across the border into Papua New Guinea. Refugees were continuing to arrive in border camps throughout 1985, although there was movement in the other direction as well under a "voluntary repatriation" program

established by the Indonesian and Papua New Guinea governments. Amnesty International expressed concern in January 1985 that neither the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) nor any other impartial international organization was permitted to monitor the return of over 100 refugees in December 1984 and that some of those returning might therefore be subject to ill-treatment by Indonesian security forces upon their arrival in Irian Jaya. The UNHCR, however, was reportedly permitted to interview three groups of refugees who departed later, in 1985, to ensure that their repatriation was indeed voluntary. UNHCR staff also were reportedly permitted to accompany the refugees to the point of embarkation.

Although the fears for the returning refugees' safety have thus been somewhat alleviated, Amnesty International remains concerned about suspected members or supporters of the OPM who are deported to Indonesia by the Papua New Guinea government. Amnesty International has received reports that of eight suspected OPM supporters deported in December, at least two, Jehezkiel Klafle and Christofel Misiren, died shortly after their arrival, and there are unconfirmed reports that their deaths were due to injuries suffered in detention. There are also reports that they died of natural causes. Amnesty International is concerned that no independent investigation of their deaths has taken place.

In June 1985, four other suspected OPM fighters were deported after reportedly captured on Papua New Guinea territory, tried (the charge is not known but may have been illegal entry) and deported by plane to Jayapura, capital of Irian Jaya. They were reportedly arrested upon arrival and unconfirmed



reports suggest they may have been tortured. Amnesty International is opposed to torture and to any cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of any prisoner, whether or not they used or advocated violence.

In an earlier circular Amnesty International expressed concern to the Indonesian government about the fate of several persons who escaped from the Jayapura Police Headquarters in April 1984. Two, Edward Mofu and Arnold Ap, had later been found dead under circumstances which suggested they had been killed in custody following their recapture. Both were active in the cultural group Mambesak which the

Indonesian authorities apparently suspected of being used for subversive purposes.

*SOURCE: AMNEITY INTERNATIONAL, LONDON, U.K.  
NOVEMBER, 1986*

---

# NUCLEAR FREE VENISON MARKETED

According to the New Zealand Game Industry Board, one of the short term effects of the Chernobyl disaster is a depression in sales of game meat (ie: venison or deer meat) in Germany. Prior to the Chernobyl incident, German importers simply brought in "game" without distinguishing the country of origin. German importers have now specifically requested that N.Z. venison be promoted as coming from New Zealand. However, the German importers don't want the obvious "nuclear free" fact laid out as they fear backlash from other importers and distributors in Europe.

## SOUTH PACIFIC HANDBOOK

a review

[This book review ran in the Fall 1986 issue of Third World Resources (464 19th St., Oakland, CA 94612, USA). We concur strongly with the sentiments of the review and urge readers looking for a single good reference book to seriously consider SOUTH PACIFIC HANDBOOK.]

South Pacific Handbook. David Stanley. Moon Publications, P.O. Box 1696, Chico, CA 95927-1696. 1986. 578pp. \$US13.95. Add \$1.25 for book rate postage and handling. Abbreviations list, illustrations, tables, photographs, maps, glossary, list of resources, chronology, index.

Though designed as a travel guide, the South Pacific Handbook also serves as a comprehensive (political) reference work on the peoples and nations of an area of the world that is shrouded in myths and ignorance.

The preface to this 3rd edition starts right off by blasting the "carefully orchestrated stream of escapist literature [on the South Pacific] from the travel industry" and forthrightly discussing atomic weapons testing, the anti-colonial struggle of the Kanaks of New Caledonia, the emergence of four new political entities in Micronesia during the next decade, and other political realities in a region that covers one third of the Earth's surface.

The 76-page introduction surveys the region as a whole and provides the traveller with all the basics on visas, money and measurements, etc. The following three sections proceed country-by-country in three groupings: Polynesia, Melanesia and Anglonesia. The latter region encompasses Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii.

The entire line of Moon (no relation to the "Moonies") publications are well-illustrated and sturdily bound.



## WASTE DUMP FOR ERIKUB?

Majuro Oct. 27 An agreement was initialed last month that would make Erikub Atoll a storage and treatment center for hazardous industrial waste from the United States.

On September 27, Wotje Senator Litokwa Tomeing and Western Pacific Waste Repositories Inc. President Dennis Capalia initialed a document which would lease Erikub to the Nevada-based company for 100 years in exchange for money and development on Wotje Atoll.

If approved, the waste company is to pay \$50,000 this month and about \$500,000 a year for the right to store industrial waste by-products which the draft agreement itself calls "hazardous wastes".

Erikub is an uninhabited

atoll less than 10 miles from Wotje. Wotje people frequently visit the tiny atoll to make copra and to hunt for turtles and other marine life.

At a meeting in Majuro last Saturday before departing to the U.S. for further waste talks, Tomeing outlined the project to a group of about 55 Wotje people.

The deal would be very beneficial to Wotje, he said, because the island would get a power plant, communications system, and an improved runway in addition to money, reported several people at the meeting. Mention was also made of a hotel and new piers. He said there would be no nuclear waste involved.

The majority of people speaking at the meeting opposed the plan or expressed strong reserva-

tions, said participants.

Objections to the atoll being used for waste one person asking "if it is safe, why don't they dump it in the U.S.?" A committee was formed which decided the project should be put on hold until further information was available and the people informed, said participants.

Tomeing departed for the U.S. the same evening as the meeting. According to the September 27 agreement, Western Pacific Waste Repositories Inc. paid \$5,000 when the pact was initialed by the Wotje iroi. A second payment of \$50,000 was to be paid on or before October 27 if the deal was signed.

Rongelap Senator:

*"I'd Rather Have Life Than Money. . ."*

Majuro Oct. 28 Rongelap Senator Jeton Anjain is mad, and he doesn't mind who knows.

"Quote me," he told the *Journal* after hearing from senator Litokwa Tomeing from Wotje about negotiations involving him and an American company to store industrial waste on either Erikub, Rongerik or Wotje.

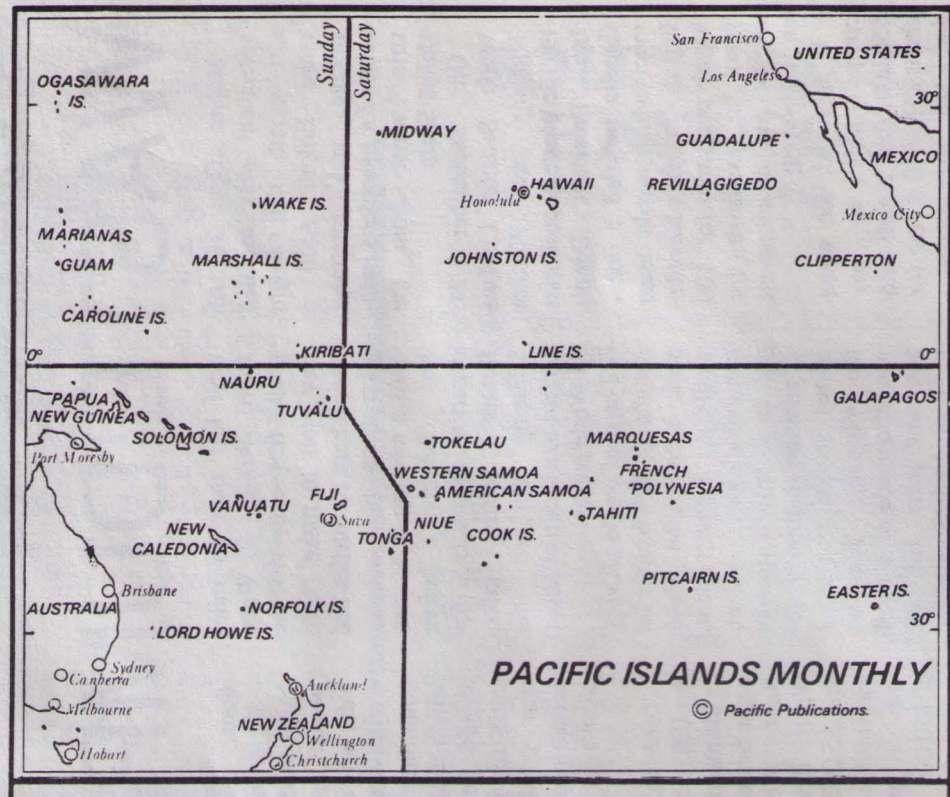
"I don't want any indus-

trial waste in Rongerik or anywhere else in the Marshall Islands," said Anjain.

"I'd rather have life than money. This project will contaminate the whole Marshall Islands."

He said he was contacting the Environmental Protection Agency and others to look into the proposal to bring "hazardous wastes" to the Marshalls.





FROM:

SOUTH  
PACIFIC  
PEOPLES  
FOUNDATION  
OF CANADA

407-620 View St.  
Victoria, British Columbia  
V8W 1J6

TO: