

Tok Blong SPPF

January 1988 #22



Photo by Elaine Briere

Longa

Painting tapa cloth in Tonga

Elaine Briere

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Congressional investigation of Palau problems disclosed

U.S. congressional investigators and auditors arrived in Palau December 3 in connection with a wide-ranging probe of the trusteeship administration of the islands and the insular government's efforts to replace it with self-governing authority.

Congressman Morris K. Udall, D-Arizona chairman of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs and Congressman Ron de Lugo, D-Virgin Islands, chairman of the Subcommittee on Insular and International Affairs, said that Palau's approval of a Compact of Free Association with the United States will be the major focus of the probe although the team has also been directed to look into other problems relating to the meeting of governing responsibilities in the western Pacific islands.

The United States conditionally approved the Compact in 1986 but conditioned the approval on the enactment of a further law because of questions about the constitutionality of Palau's approval. Legislation to authorize implementation of the Compact was proposed by President Ronald Reagan Monday, after being requested by Palau President Lazurus Salii.

Palau's approval of the Compact is still open to question because the withdrawal of a suit challenging the approval may have been "brought about by intimidation through the use of violence" in the words of the Palau Supreme Court justice who heard the case.

■ Resource Available ■ Investigative Packet on Palau (Belau)

This packet was developed by the Belauan community in Portland, Oregon with help of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Sent to U.S. Congressmen, it is full of excellent documentation on the situation in Belau. Available for \$US 12 from AFSC, 2249 E. Burnside, Portland, Ore. 97214.

Canadian Network Meets

The Canadian Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific support network will meet from February 26-28, 1988 at Camp Alexandra, Crescent Beach (near Vancouver). The meeting is for organizational representatives and individual activists committed to the NFIP movement. The meeting will hear a report on the Manila Conference, receive issue updates, and develop network actions and strategies.

Cost is \$55 (includes meals and room). Further information and registration through SPPF, 409-620 View St., Victoria, B.C. V8W 1J6.

About this newsletter . . .

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, 409-620 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. Partial financial support for this newsletter from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is gratefully acknowledged. We welcome readers comments on items carried in this newsletter, as well as suggestions for articles and copies of Pacific news clippings, etc, which would be of use to our work. **TOK BLONG SPPF** is edited by Phil Esmonde.

UPDATE ON THE MOVEMENT

a report on the Fifth Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Conference, Manila 1987.

By Phil Esmonde

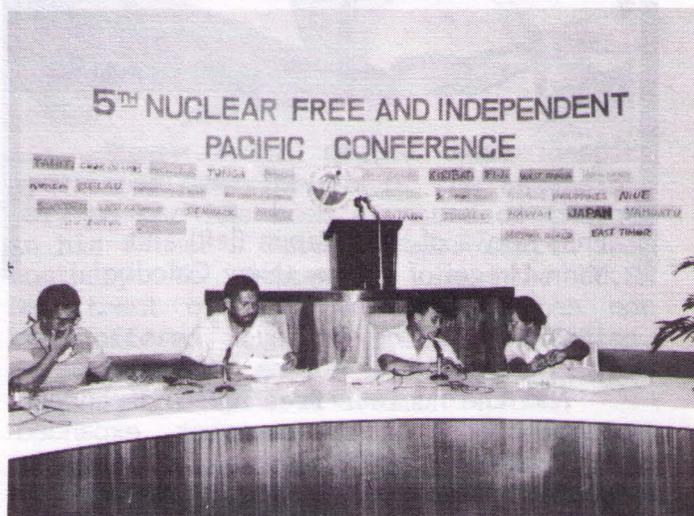
From 9-15 November 1987, close to 100 activists from around the Pacific congregated in the PIUS XII Conference Centre in Manila, the Philippines. They were there to discuss, update and network on the range of issues which form the agenda of the grass roots Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) movement, and to set the movement's agenda for coming years.

This was the first international conference of the movement since July 1983, when the fourth NFIP conference was held in Vanuatu. The movement, founded in Fiji in 1975, is the heartbeat of regional social justice and peace organizations.

Much had changed since the Vanuatu conference of 1983. A partial nuclear weapons free zone had been initiated by Pacific Island governments; the independence struggle in Kanaky [New Caledonia] had intensified and become more violent; France had begun new initiatives in the Pacific Islands, spending aid money to curry favour and ease constant criticism of its ongoing nuclear tests in "French" Polynesia; the situation in Belau, the world's first constitutionally nuclear free state, deteriorated as the United States kept the people isolated and dependent on U.S. aid, forcing them to overturn the constitution amid mounting violence and internal anarchy; Japan continued to jockey on the international stage for room to carry through with its plan to dump low level nuclear wastes into the Pacific Ocean; a dictator had been removed from the Philippines but to little avail; the whole Pacific region had

witnessed a momentous growth of militarization; and Fiji - long a model of racial accommodation - elected a prime minister (Timoci Bavadra) dedicated to the principles of the NFIP movement only to have two subsequent coups remove him completely from power.

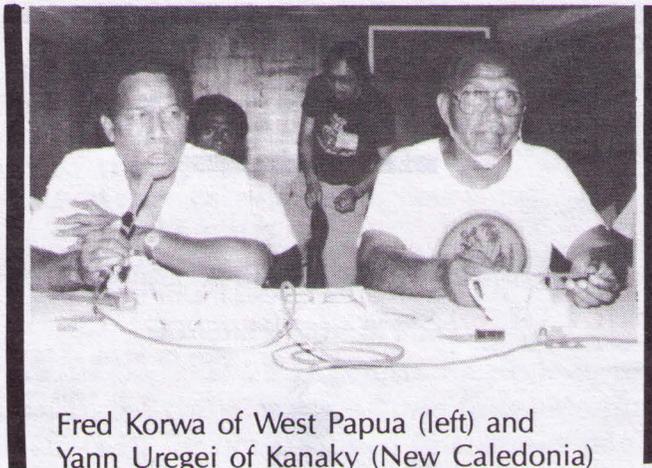
These were not new issues for the 61 delegates and 38 observers representing 25 countries at the conference. Many were living and leading the struggles for peace and social justice in their own countries. Also attending were regional organizations such as the Melanesia Council of Churches, the University of the South Pacific Students Association and the Episcopal Conference of the Pacific.



Because of mounting violence in the Philippines, the conference centre was watched over by privately-hired armed guards, a constant reminder that the Philippines was in a state of undeclared martial law.

While security concerns were real, they did not prevent delegates from joining with local groups to march and demonstrate at the U.S. Embassy with a call to shut down the U.S. bases at Clark and Subic Bay. In a later resolution delegates called on the U.S. to refrain from intervening in Philippines political, military, economic and cultural life, and supported an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the bases. The conference condemned the rising social costs of the bases, and called for suspension of all foreign military aid.

The NFIP movement has as its "Magna Carta" the Peoples' Charter for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific. Expressing concern with the continuing deterioration in the Philippines and the rest of the Pacific region, and upon recommendation of the indigenous peoples of the Pacific, the Charter's preamble was amended to include the anger enunciated in the 1975 original charter.



Fred Korwa of West Papua (left) and Yann Uregei of Kanaky (New Caledonia)

And the nuclear free and independent geographic zone of the movement, expanded several times since its inception, was "in principle" expanded to reach the western shores of North America, thus coming in direct contact with indigenous nations

along the coast as far north as Alaska. The NFIP Steering Committee, with representatives from seven regions, will work out the specific boundaries of the new zone, but it is clear that it will do much to strengthen the links between North American activists and the peoples of the Pacific, and assist in solidarity efforts amongst Pacific peoples. The proposed new zone will likely be open for signatures and support of the affected indigenous nations of North America.

The conference expressed concern over the increasing militarization of the Pacific, evidenced by new weapons' deployment, naval buildups, increased warship visits and growing superpower tensions.

Delegates deplored "the rape of our Mother Earth by foreigners who are intent on polluting our waters with nuclear waste; who are intent in destroying the world with the construction of nuclear weapons; who are depleting our natural resources at an alarming rate; and who are interested only in maximizing profit at the expense of our cultures, our resources and our spirituality".

It was in 1983 that the then Nuclear Free Pacific movement became the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement. It was a conscious connection between the ongoing colonial structures and attitudes and the continued militarization of the region. The independence link was not only affirmed in Manila but took on even stronger importance. It was recognized that unless and until the political, economic and military structures which feed colonialism and racism are changed, calling for a Nuclear Free Pacific will remain a call in the wind. The conference affirmed the pivotal need for independence.

Canadian government action in the Pacific came under focused criticism. Noting that Canada was the only foreign country to use the archaeologically-rich and sacred Hawaiian island of Kaho'olawe for ship to shore target practice, the conference called on delegates of all countries to mount pressure on the Canadian government to halt this travesty against the Hawaiian people. The

conference called for demonstrations at Canadian embassies and missions abroad and for Canada to refrain from using the island for shelling during May 1988 RIMPAC military exercises.

Issue "flashpoints" discussed at the conference included Fiji, Belau (Palau) and Kanaky (New Caledonia).

Much conference time was spent on Fiji, potentially an issue which could have split the movement because some accepted the coups as indigenous people rightfully gaining control over their lands and culture.

The conference heard from Jone Dakuvula, a Fijian living in Wellington, Aotearoa (New Zealand) and a cousin of coup-leader Colonel Rabuka, that indigenous lands and culture were already secured under the 1970 Fijian constitution. He stated that the coups were stimulated by a desire of the traditional Council of Chiefs to retain their control in Fiji through their political servants, the Alliance Party of Fiji, which was ousted in the election of April 1987. Dakuvula noted that the prime minister-elect was Fijian, that all cabinet posts sensitive to Fijians were given to Fijians, and that the Bavadra government was supportive of banning nuclear warship visits to Fiji, of joining the non-aligned movement, and soon after the election came out in support of independence struggles in Kanaky (New Caledonia) and West Papua (Irian Jaya). Dakuvula further informed the conference that some members of the Fiji Anti-Nuclear Group (FANG) had been arrested and harassed, and that there had been repression of trade unions and political activity.

The conference recognized and endorsed the inalienable rights of the indigenous people of Fiji to all their lands, their culture and their religion, expressed sympathy for the suffering of the Indo-Fijians under a repressive regime, and condemned the military coups in Fiji as a means of achieving political power, and military dictatorship as a means of exercising political power.

Concern was expressed at the possible collaboration by the Fiji regime with the military forces of France and Indonesia, as well as a continued Fiji-United States military relationship.

Delegates and observers next recognized the personal tragedy of NFIP chairperson, Roman Bedor, whose father was shot and killed in early September in Belau (Palau). Bedor, in attendance at the Manila conference, stated that the assassination had been aimed at himself. He vowed to continue to fight for justice and a nuclear free Belau. He indicated that further court cases are forthcoming questioning the validity of the August 1987 constitutional amendment and subsequent acceptance of the Compact of Free Association between Belau and the U.S. (which would see Belau become a military base).



Roman Bedor stated that despite eyewitness descriptions of the assassin's car, no one has been arrested or charged in his father's death. Bedor stated that contrary to statements by the U.S. Department of the Interior, he has not been offered personal police protection. He stated that tension in Belau still runs very high, despite a veneer of calm.

As if to underscore this latter point, Bedor pointed out that certain people in Belau had been calling his law office to ascertain whether he had left Belau for Manila. In Manila, the hosting organizations provided Bedor his own

bodyguard for fear that another assassination attempt would be made.

It was noted that the United States is pushing for quick implementation of the Compact, a legal document thicker than the Bible, and the longest agreement the U.S. has ever developed with another country. Bedor indicated that it was a "compact of annexation".

The conference delegates condemned the process of intimidation in Belau and the continued disregard for the voters of Belau.



They further indicated that they would support the struggle in Belau by requesting their national governments [for example, Canada] to:

- 1) ensure as members of the United Nations that the U.N. fulfill its trusteeship responsibilities to develop the Trust Territory politically and economically toward the goal of independence and self-government, and
- 2) to work for this fulfillment through direct diplomatic contact with the U.S. government and through the U.N. Security Council, Trusteeship Council and Special Committee of Twenty-four.

The other "flashpoint" discussed was Kanaky (New Caledonia), the French colony 1,000 miles northeast of Australia. The conference heard from Yann Uregei, the Foreign Minister of the FLNKS (Kanak

National Socialist Liberation Front) that the referendum held by France on September 13 was a sham. He stated that a Kanak boycott was successful with 83% of Kanaks staying away. He said that France viewed the results as support for their policy of developing a so-called Statute of Autonomy for New Caledonia which would be little more than a statute of integration.

Uregei noted that there are 8,500 French soldiers in Kanaky; one for every seven Kanaks. He expressed gratitude for the NFIP movement's solidarity and support in having New Caledonia re-inscribed on the United Nations decolonization list. He noted that New Caledonia was on the list in 1946 and that France removed it without U.N. permission in 1947.

In Kanaky, he said, colonization meant "men are in the place of cattle and cattle are in the place of men", a reference to Kanaks being removed from their fertile lands and being pushed onto reserves.

The FLNKS supports a nuclear free and independent Pacific and makes the clear links between continued colonization and the increasing militarization of the region.

The conference joined in condemning the September 13, 1987 referendum and the continuing repression of the Kanak people, and encouraged the South Pacific Forum, the Non-Aligned Movement and the U.N. Decolonization Committee to continue their support for the independence of Kanaky.

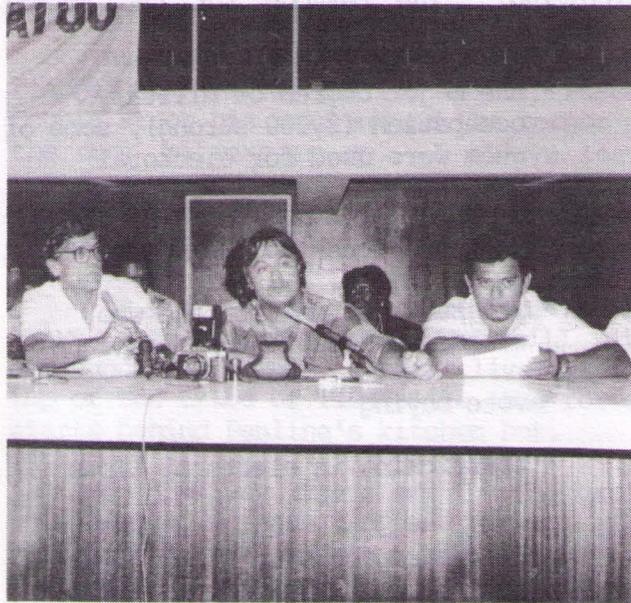
In all the conference passed 24 resolutions and 5 action proposals.

Resolutions included support for the independence struggles in Tahiti-Polynesia and a halt to French nuclear testing; support for West Papua (Irian Jaya) and East Timor, both suffering as colonies of Indonesia; and support for indigenous struggles throughout the Pacific, in particular those of the indigenous minorities in the Philippines who have become a target of increasing government military actions.

The NFIP movement plans to establish a central "hotline" to deal with the

increasing human rights violations in the region and to ensure quick solidarity actions in the movement as well as acting through such groups as Amnesty International.

The conference took note of the (then-proposed) Reagan-Gorbachev Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force (INF) reductions and expressed a need for inclusion of sea-based INFs, such as the Tomahawk and SS-NX-21 sea-launched cruise missiles (making a "triple zero" agreement). Delegates noted the alarming increase in militarization of the Pacific Ocean, and called for this global "triple zero" agreement, rather than the proposed "double zero" agreement. The conference called on all national peace movements to get support for "triple zero".



This conference also endorsed **Disarm the Seas Week** to be held May 22-30, 1988 and encouraged full participation in the Pacific Campaign to Disarm the Seas' efforts.

Noting increased U.S. military activity in Alaska and the likely increase in US-USSR tensions resulting from them, the conference condemned any continued move toward the development of these nuclear facilities such as a possible trident base and called for the removal of all nuclear weapons and facilities from Alaska.

The conference also called for an ending of U.S. Star Wars research at Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands, social justice for the misplaced people of Kwajalein, and just compensation for the victims of U.S. nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands.

Recognizing the need for structural change, the conference took its own progressive step by calling for the setting up of an NFIP Economics Commission. Over the next three years, the Commission would (1) gather information on initiatives taken by peoples of the Pacific regions to overcome economic exploitation and dependency, (2) gather information about initiatives taken in other parts of the world, (3) investigate the underlying factors causing economic underdevelopment, (4) share this information among the NFIP network and supportive NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and, (5) encourage support and initiate economically sustainable, environmentally sound and people-directed projects among indigenous peoples of the Pacific.

This conference, unlike the previous ones, included a pre-conference caucus of indigenous peoples which assisted in the transfer of information, as well as offering support and understanding. For the first time, non-indigenous support groups met together to clarify their role in the movement and to discuss ways in which they could better their support and understanding of it.

The co-ordination of the movement remains in Aotearoa (New Zealand); the newsletter **Pacific Bulletin** continues to come out of Australia, and delegates supported the opening of an information resource centre in Hawaii as soon as funds allow. Under consideration as well is the setting up of a campaign coordination office in either Western Samoa or Kanaky.

The movement consciously decided to de-centralize its structure in 1985. While this led to some transitional problems and a loss of some momentum, a full-time coordinator is working and active fundraising continues. The movement has limited funds and needs to

hear from funding agencies willing to support its ongoing work.

The successful completion of the Manila Conference showed that the movement remains strong, committed and organized. It is also growing.

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" I am pleased to see that the NFIP used a consensus approach rather than the often divisive majority vote system. This approach is reflective of our traditional systems and I would point to it as an expression of one of the most basic strengths of the NFIP movement. At times we will find that our western sense of urgency or timing must be sacrificed, but our decisions will be thoughtful and have a loyal subscription.

I was also pleased to see that the NFIP is able to maintain its Indigenous bias while permitting the active participation of non-indigenous support groups. This forum may be historically unique in this quality and underscores the need for coming together and overcoming our personal racism and desires to dominate. "

Michael Nicoll, Canadian Indigenous delegate to the Manila Conference representing the Haida Nation (Queen Charlotte Islands).

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MANILA CONFERENCE PACKET OF RESOLUTIONS AND ACTION PROPOSALS

38 pages available for
\$3.00 from: SPPF,
409-620 View St.,
Victoria, B.C.
CANADA V8W 1J6

FLNKS APPEALS BALLOTING

The **FLNKS**, the Kanak Socialist Liberation Front, boycotted the September 13, 1987 referendum in Kanaky (New Caledonia) because it came nowhere near meeting the conditions acceptable for a self-determination vote. The FLNKS has filed an appeal with the French Council of State in order to determine the honesty of the balloting. The reasons for the appeal are:

- * the major degree of military occupation (8,000 strong), some of whom were used for electoral purposes
- * unequal access to the media
- * pressure put on citizens who wished to boycott the elections
- * vote buying
- * trafficking in electoral lists
- * double registration
- * refusal to allow monitors and assessors from the FLNKS into balloting places
- * an important amount of invalid proxy voting
- * irregularity in the holding of the balloting
- * movement of voting offices and the presence of the police in and around voting places

The FLNKS had scheduled a Congress for the end of November to determine the next strategies to take on their path to independence.

NO WINNERS FROM NOUMEA TRIAL

IN OCTOBER SEVEN NEW CALEDONIAN
SETTLERS WERE ACQUITTED OF THE MURDER
OF 10 KANAKS. ANNE BLISS BACKGROUNDS
THE TRIALS AND REPORTS HOW A JUDICIAL
VICTORY HAS TURNED TO ASHES FOR THE
FREED SETTLERS.

At 5:30, long before the morning sun reached the valley of Tiendanite, Pascal Couhia stuck his head around the corner of the door to wake me up. I always leave the door open when I stay at Pascal's; I wouldn't want to miss the glory of the New Caledonian stars at night.

By 6 am Pascal, his wife Pauline and I were walking down the steep hill with our bundles and bags. Pascal lives at the top of the tribe of Tiendanite, the forest starts behind Pauline's kitchen hut.

On the way down, our little group grew larger at each hut we passed. The people of Tiendanite were on their way to Noumea to be part of the latest stage of that incomprehensible event that changed their lives and their tribe forever - the massacre of Hienghene.

On the winding dirt road to Hienghene our bus drove past the house of Maurice Mitride, settler, and his pasture that slopes gently at first and then drops off to the river.

Suddenly all talk in the bus stopped, the driver turned off the radio, there was an oppressive silence, nobody looked outside, nobody raised a head except for me.

I stared at the killing field, the ditch, the barbed wire fence and the two bullet-riddled, burned-out pick-up trucks,

now festooned with strips of cloth and ribbons and a health crop of "immortelles" pushing their bright white, pink and red flowers through the slowly rusting springs of the drivers' seats.

Ten men died here three years ago. The widows and relatives in the bus had no need to stare as I did. They had seen the blood-soaked pasture and the shot-up bodies the morning after the killing - "like sieves, they looked like sieves", they had repeated to me over and over again.

They were going to Noumea to be part of the trial of the seven settlers accused of premeditated murder and ambush. They did not expect justice from the trial: had not the seven been set free a year ago because the prosecutor felt there was nothing to prosecute since it had been an act of justifiable self defense?

They came, some of them as witnesses but the others to talk about the dead, to make sure they were remembered as fathers, sons, husbands, and not relegated to a footnote of "the history of squashed dogs", as Jean-Marie Tjibaou, brother of two of the dead and leader of the Kanak Liberation Front (FLNKS), put it.

The trial lasted 10 days. More than 80 witnesses were heard, as well as the survivors and the widows. The jury of nine, all white except for one woman who

was part Indonesian, and most of them caldoches (settlers) had only to reach a five to four majority. They deliberated roughly two hours, including time out for dinner, and came back with a verdict of not guilty.

There was pandemonium in the courtroom, which had been packed by Noumea socialites who wanted to hear the final speech for the defense by the big gun from Paris. People jumped up and applauded wildly, the Mitride-Lapetite supporters screamed, the local press contingent ran out for the phone, the television crew ran in for footage of the seven men, now free.

Only on the other side of the courtroom, among the Kanaks, was there stunned silence. People quietly made their way out to join the 300 Kanaks waiting on the sidewalk. On the other side of the street, the caldoches were jubilant. "Vive la France," they shouted and leaned on their car horns as they drove off.

But did they really win? Are they vindicated with this acquittal? Will life return to normal now? Who, then, are these seven men who indulged in this orgy of killing, the "quasi-ritual murders" as the solicitor-general called it?

Some of Maurice Mitride's ancestors came from Reunion, a French possession in the Indian Ocean. He is slight and dark skinned with short, kinky hair.

Raoul Lapetite's mother was a Kanak. He is dark skinned with the broad build of a Kanak. His four sons, Jean-Claude, Jacques, Jess, and Jose, are indistinguishable from many of the lighter skinned Kanaks I have seen.

Robert Sineimene's mother is a small, elderly Kanak woman from Lifou. His father was Japanese. He is tall and a darker brown than several of the survivors. Yet all seven fervently consider themselves European. And therein lies a much deeper tragedy.

There are two kinds of French citizens in New Caledonia. Those of the "statut civil", who are "Europeans", and

those of the "statut particulier" who are Kanak. Legally, children who have a non-Kanak father and a Kanak mother are considered "statut civil". And so it is that most of the "metis", people of mixed blood, consider themselves European.

Since the events of 1984, this term has undergone subtle changes. At first, it simply meant non-Kanaks with some European ancestry, but soon it became to mean anti-independentists. Once the idea of the referendum had been hatched the local news media changed the neutral concept of anti-independentist to the value-charged "loyalist".

When the word loyalist had gained currency it was no longer possible to be a good European without also being a loyalist. Conversely a non-loyalist, that is an old fashioned independence supporter, instantly became a bad European and a traitor.

In that manner the many small farmers and cattle raisers in the bush, who not so long ago had made common cause with the Kanaks to shake off the stranglehold of the Paris administration which barred their access to even minor civil service jobs, found themselves caught up in this Chirac News-speak.

Once the Kanaks had made it clear that nothing short of independence was acceptable, panic set in. The idea of being governed by those barefooted black men from the tribes was simply unacceptable, and the settlers quickly wrapped themselves in the French flag and threw themselves on the bosom of France, effecting the most miraculous transformation from stubborn caldoches to flag-waving French patriots.

But how European are these Europeans from the New Caledonian bush? Often their grandfathers, not very successful in France, arrived about 100 years ago to seek a new life and the opportunities promised them by Governor Feuillet, who wanted to put an end to New Caledonia as a penal colony by bringing in a large number of settlers.

With few exceptions, such as the families Lafleur, Barrau, and Pentecost,

the small-time farmers remained just that. Making a living from the parcels of land allotted to them was far harder than they imagined, and most vexing of all, the land was not empty but owned and cultivated by the Kanaks.

But they toiled on, gradually appropriating the Kanaks' fertile land by letting their cattle destroy gardens and yam plantations and moving their fences further and further into tribal land.

Contact with France was tenuous, their numerous progeny were raised to hunt and fish, with minimal concessions to education. Neighbours lived far away. Often their only human contact was with the proverbial "little Javanese", who tended his garden in the area, and the Kanaks from surrounding tribes.

Gradually their Frenchness disappeared, the intricate structure, grammar and vocabulary of French gave way to a language at its most basic. Many of them could barely read or write. France was so far away it had become an irritation.

There was one European concept, however, to which the caldoches clung unquestioningly - the capitalist notion of land ownership. To the Kanaks land is inalienable and forever owned by the original clan - it may be shared freely and used by those in need. To the caldoches, however, once property had been deeded to them by the colonial government, the land and its use became theirs till they chose to sell.

Once various clans began to suggest to Mitride and Lapetite that their land ought to be shared again with the original owners battle lines were drawn. At the trial the accused said that it was to defend their houses from arson and their families from being driven off their land and exiled that they considered it necessary to kill the men from Tiendanite. It is probable that they hoped also to kill Jean-Marie Tjibaou.

But they grossly miscalculated. Jean-Marie Tjibaou was safely in Noumea and the killing caused unprecedented panic among the settlers, so that by next

morning nearly all the non-Kanak residents of the Hienghene area had fled to Noumea, where they still live.

Those seven free men of the bush may have won the battle, but their war is irredeemably lost. They and their families can no longer go home now. Their properties lie fallow and Mitride's has become a monument to the 10 dead, who are beginning to enter the pantheon of Kanak martyrs.

They are condemned to live in a hideous high-rise development outside Noumea, appropriately called St Quentin, where they subsist on a meagre pension and handouts from the Front National, Jean-Marie Le Pen's ultra-right party. There is no bush near, no deer to hunt, no rivers to fish in, no fields to tend, only idleness and fear for the future.

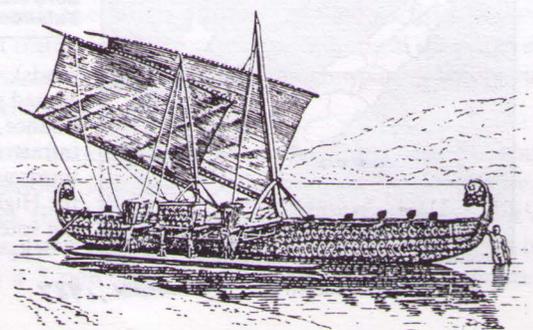
The seven and their families, who know no life but that of the subsistence farmer in the bush, by their ill-considered action have been exiled to the life of the marginal urban European.

Tiendanite, meanwhile, has come to terms with the tragedy. The dead have been laid to rest, the Kanaky flag flutters high above the 10 graves, the tribespeople have begun various small economic projects to make up for the loss of the 10 men's labour, a new communal kitchen has been built - life is as normal as it can be.

The Kanaks know that it is their island and that they will always be there. Change, and with it independence, is only a question of time.

Who, then, are the winners and who are the losers?

[Reprinted from: THE DOMINION, Wellington, New Zealand, Nov 16/87]



Pons Autonomy Plan "a Sham"

Bernard Pons' long-awaited plan for New Caledonia draws criticism.

THE PLAN for New Caledonian autonomy announced in October by French Minister for Overseas Departments and Territories, Bernard Pons, and adopted by the conservative Chirac Government early in November, has drawn sharp criticism both from New Caledonian separatists and the President of France, Francois Mitterrand.

A spokeswoman for President Mitterrand said he feared "these questionable measures" could "quickly become intolerable to a large part of New Caledonia's population", and that he believed it would have been more appropriate to adopt the proposal "at a time of greater peace".

The Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS) has attacked the proposal as a retrograde step in self-determination for the territory, and independent observers have questioned both its sincerity and its effectiveness. The current electoral division of New Caledonia into four divisions — North, Centre, South (including the capital, Noumea) and Loyalty Islands — encompasses 32 communes and municipalities. The North has 13 communes, the Centre 12, South four and the Loyalty Islands three.

The Pons plan would see a radical redistribution of regional boundaries, but would leave the present communal structure intact. The new West Region would include 17 communes, the new East region eight, the South (which would lose the communes of Paita and Dumbéa but gain Yaté and the Isle of Pines) four, and the Loyalty Islands would remain unchanged.

Representation at the communal level would not, on present indications, alter. However, pro-independence parties will see their control reduced at a regional level: the new plan means the FLNKS and its allies can control only two regions instead of the three they control at present.

According to Mr Michel Menachem-

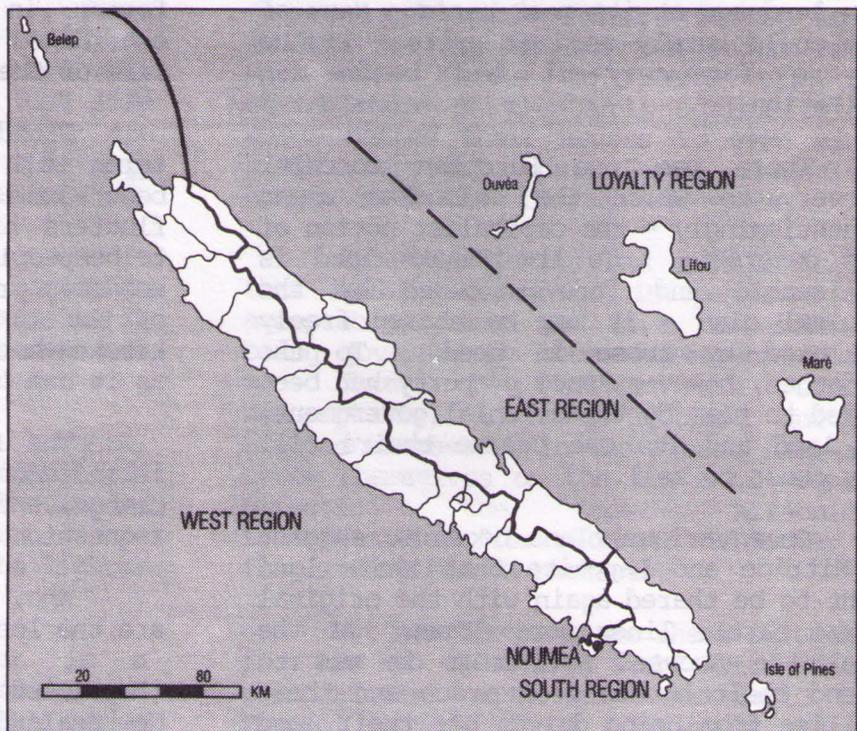
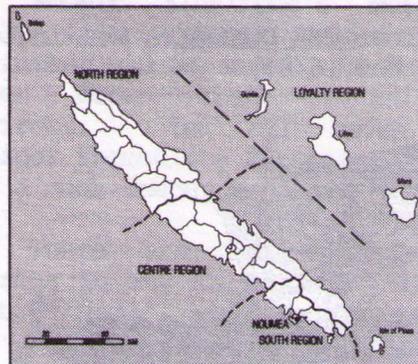
off, Consul-General of France in Sydney, the plan offers a means of giving New Caledonians of all political persuasions experience in administration and government without the difficulties and "inconvenience" of full independence.

The present High Commissioner's role, he explains, will be reduced to a consultative one; he will act as an arbiter between the State (responsible for foreign relations, defence, public security, the police and the judiciary) and the new Executive Council, which has taken over many of the functions of the former High Commissioner's office, the Territorial Congress and the regional councils.

The Territorial Congress will disappear, replaced by an expanded Executive Council responsible for the administration of the territory. It will be composed of four permanent members (regional

operate, being responsible for the administration of communal and municipal matters and with some of their functions taken over by the Executive Council. This response to the September referendum, Mr Menachemoff says, reflects New Caledonians' desire to retain their links with the Republic of France but to continue in "association" with France rather than as a non self-governing territory.

Pro-independence spokespersons counter Mr Menachemoff's assurances with claims that power will be more centralised and that autonomy will be actively suppressed by the Pons statute, which they describe as "a sham". Regional powers, they say, will be restricted to management at a local level, agriculture, road and transport maintenance, tourism and "cultural animation". In other words, the regional councils' powers would



Left: New Caledonia as it is now. Above: New regional divisions will alter the balance of power in New Caledonia.

heads), five elected members and an elected president, and will take control of finance, budgetary matters, education, infrastructure and so on: a majority of two thirds will be needed on major issues, and the High Commissioner will have a casting vote in deadlocked meetings.

The regional councils will continue to

be reduced to purely internal "machine-tending" functions, without significant influence on territorial affairs.

Real autonomy, they say — much less independence — is hardly likely to receive meaningful consideration by bodies whose primary responsibilities are for roadworks and folkloric activities. □

Tourism in the Pacific Islands

An SPPF Fact Sheet

INTRODUCTION

The Pacific Islands have long been touted as a haven for tourists and, since the late sixties, the tourism industry has grown fairly steadily throughout most of the region. In recent years, the Pacific Islands have experienced more tourists willing to spend their hard-earned dollars (and, increasingly, yen) in search of the "Unspoiled Paradise" advertised by overseas travel bureaus.

And it is not only the major island groups like Fiji and Tahiti which are attempting to attract flocks of tourists in order to generate economic growth; tourism interest and development is on the upswing in Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, Kiribati and other areas. The apparent benefits of tourism for these islands are many: increased revenue from foreign investment and exchange, increased employment and an expected increase in living standards, to name a few. However, while Pacific Island governments view tourism as a good revenue-earner, they are also aware that the tourism industry can bring strong challenges to island cultures and unexpected long-term costs.

TOURISTS: WHERE DO THEY COME FROM? WHERE DO THEY GO?

The three major cultural regions in the Pacific Islands—Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia—receive tourists from three principal areas: Australia and New Zealand, Japan and North America. To a much lesser extent, small numbers of tourists come from within the Pacific Islands themselves.

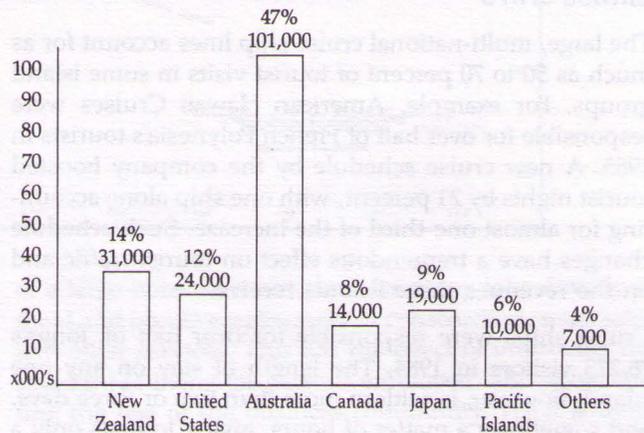
The Australians and New Zealanders frequent the southern islands such as Fiji, the Cook Islands, Tahiti and Western Samoa for historical, economical and geographical reasons. They also travel to parts of Melanesia, specifically New Caledonia and Vanuatu, and increasingly to Papua New Guinea.

The Japanese constitute a significant portion of the "package tour" trade, travelling extensively into Micronesia, with Guam being the favourite destination, particularly for honeymooners. The majority of Japanese tourists are in the 18 to 35 age group, and the package tour format appeals directly to them.

Most North Americans travel to well-known resorts in

Hawaii and Fiji, with increasing numbers continuing in a straight line to Australia. They seem hesitant to stray off the beaten path and rarely visit the smaller island countries.

TOURIST ORIGINS FOR FIJI (1985)



The airlines play a major role in determining tourist destinations in the islands. Companies such as Qantas, Continental and Japan Air Lines often initiate or discontinue service on the grounds of tourist flow to different areas, availability of airport services, operational considerations, etc. Tourist numbers reflect these variables. For instance, as much as 20 percent of Fiji's tourist trade is the result of stopovers by airlines en route between North American and Australia. Recently, the increased use of long range 747 jets, being more comfortable and efficient per passenger mile, has resulted in many planes overflying Fiji. Consequently the number of American tourists has declined 10 per cent.

A number of island countries have attempted to establish small, inter-island airlines. However, insufficient connections with the larger airlines, as well as fluctuations in tourist traffic and the occurrence of natural disasters such as hurricanes, make these smaller companies barely viable economically.

Another major factor in determining Pacific tourist destinations is currency fluctuation. For example, in 1984-85, the devaluation of the New Zealand dollar and the resulting rise in the Fijian dollar is reported to have led to a 3 percent drop from the previous year in the

number of New Zealanders travelling to Fiji.

TYPES OF TOURIST TRADE

PACKAGE TOURS

Well-organized package tours account for a large number of Pacific visitors. Patrons are herded into hotels and bussed in groups to see the sights. These tours are popular because they are, for many, the least expensive and most comfortable way to see the Pacific. A disadvantage is that tours are generally confined to well-travelled areas where the larger, internationally-owned resorts can accommodate them. The economic benefits to island countries are limited because the monies involved remain within the international airline/hotel/tour operator network. The Club Mediterranean complexes in Noumea, New Caledonia and Moorea in French Polynesia are two prime examples of this type of resort.

CRUISE SHIPS

The large, multi-national cruise ship lines account for as much as 50 to 70 percent of tourist visits in some island groups. For example, American Hawaii Cruises were responsible for over half of French Polynesia's tourists in 1985. A new cruise schedule by the company boosted tourist nights by 21 percent, with one ship alone accounting for almost one-third of the increase. Such schedule changes have a tremendous effect on tourist traffic and on the revenues these islands receive.

Cruise ships were responsible for over half of Tonga's 78,213 visitors in 1984. The length of stay on any one island, however, is seldom more than two or three days, and sometimes a matter of hours, giving tourists only a small appreciation of the places visited. There is a positive side to this superficiality. Cruise ships constitute self-contained worlds. There is no need for island nations to build the expensive infrastructure of hotels and runways and the brevity of tourist sojourns ashore limits the negative effects of tourism.

What is particularly important about cruise ship and airline traffic is that the amount and destination of this traffic is dictated in the metropolitan centres far removed from and beyond the control of the Pacific Islands. Thus Air Chile's decision in Santiago to reduce its flight service to Easter Island from two flights to one per week reduced that island's tourist revenue by 50 percent overnight.

SPECIALTY TOURS

This category includes such excursions as diving tours, inter-island "windjammer" sailing tours and "yachties".

Diving tours are on the rise in all areas of the Pacific Islands. The appeal is for a more adventurous trip and the opportunity to experience the beauty and wonders which surround the islands. Places like Fiji, Vanuatu and French Polynesia market the beauty of their reefs in order to draw the diving tourist, while places such as Papua

New Guinea, Truk and Guam boast the presence of World War II wrecks in their waters.

Sailing tours such as the Barefoot Windjammer Cruises attract a small share of the tourist market—so small that such cruises are available in only a few areas, the largest being centered in Fiji.

"Yachties" is the term describing individuals who sail private yachts to the islands in search of the "Pacific Paradise". They are relatively few in number, but do contribute directly to local tourist trade by the purchase of supplies, fuel, etc., often in the more remote islands.

ALTERNATIVE TOURISM

The object of this type of vacation is a more active and culturally sensitive trip. Visitors stay at locally owned hotels or inns and experience the local life style of the area by closer association with the indigenous people. At its best, this form of tourism results in visitors leaving with a deeper understanding of the places and peoples they visited. At its worst, it results in visitors exploiting the hospitality of their island hosts without realizing the inconvenience their visits constitute.

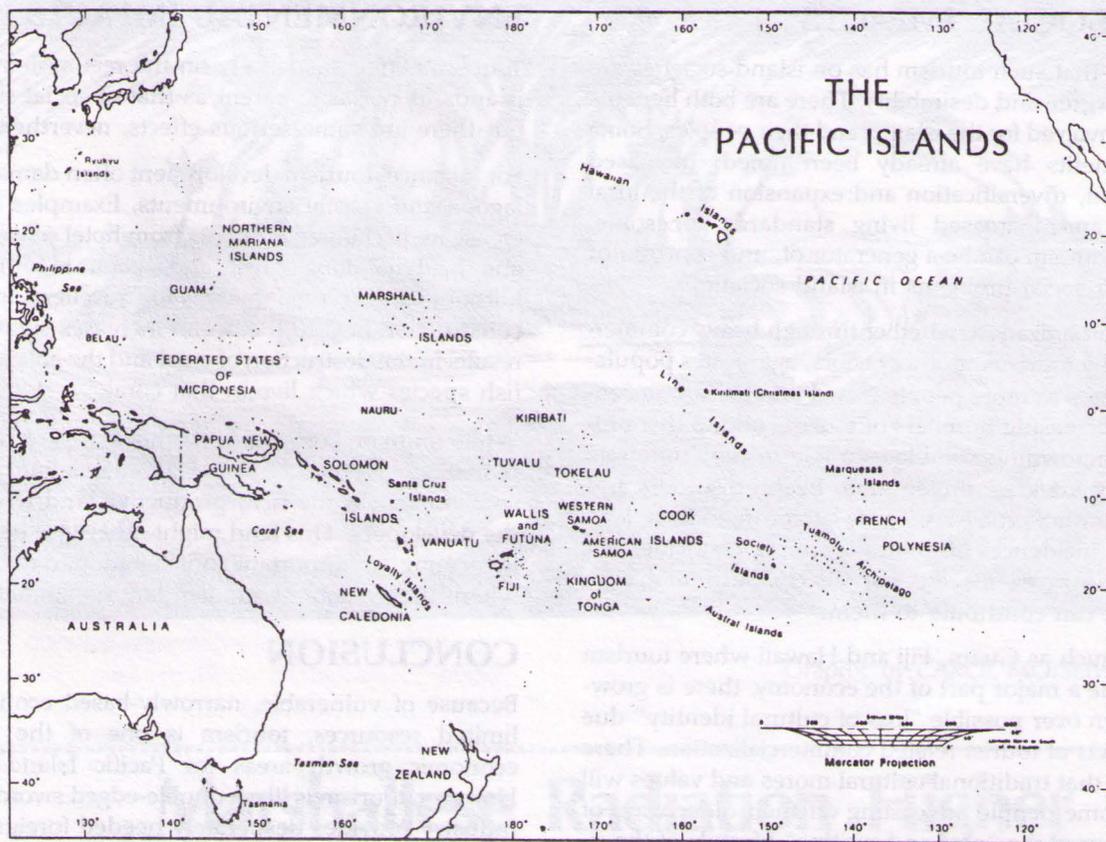
THE ECONOMICS OF TOURISM

The annual amount of money generated by the tourism industry in the Pacific is tremendous. For example, in 1984, Fiji hotels alone brought in over \$U.S. 70 million, about half of the total revenues for the nation that year. In Guam, tourism was responsible for 39 per cent of all retail sales in 1984. In Hawaii the industry is the major source of revenue and brought in \$U.S. 3.6 billion in 1985.

Of the money generated by tourism in the Pacific Islands, roughly 25-30 percent stays in the islands. This is in areas where large resorts are the mainstay of the tourist economy. Funds seep into the economy through wages earned by local employees, by revenues from taxation and through the sale of local goods such as food and crafts. The other 70-75 percent of tourism revenues goes to the multinational companies who own and control the industry.

In island countries where the growth and management of tourism is locally controlled to a greater extent, for example the Cook Islands, the amount of tourism revenue remaining in the local economy is much higher. In the Cooks, the number of large resorts is modest compared with the number of independent, islander-owned hotels and resorts. Smaller enterprises are also more common in some of the lesser-known island nations like the Solomons where lower tourist numbers make large resorts unviable.

Even in places where the multinationals take most of the profits, the host government can still receive millions, as is the case in Fiji, Guam, and especially Hawaii, where billions are generated each year. However, these revenues must be balanced against the costs of creating and maintaining a diverse and sophisticated tourism infrastructure.



Generally, the local government subsidizes the cost of upgrading and expanding sewer systems, transportation/communication systems, airports, roads, etc. These expenditures can be enormous and may often outweigh the profits. Furthermore, infrastructural changes often have widespread implications for the tourist economy. Thus the decision to lengthen and/or strengthen an island airport runway means that larger aircraft can land. The resulting increase in passenger numbers, in turn, means more pressure on airport facilities, local transportation, water systems, accommodation facilities, imported food and liquor supplies, etc.

As large as the industry is in some areas, virtually all of the economies are running at deficits and are dependent upon foreign or mother-country aid to keep from foundering. Consider the examples of Fiji and New Caledonia. In Fiji, tourism is close to surpassing the primary crop of sugar, due to recent losses to that industry from hurricane damage. Fiji's deficit hit \$U.S. 100 million in 1984. In New Caledonia, tourism is second only to the production of nickel. Even smaller nations such as Kiribati, whose deficit was \$U.S. 20 million in 1984, have to borrow extensively to support their burgeoning tourist trades, particularly when it is borne in mind that island governments often must offer tax holidays and other economic incentives to attract tourism development in the first place.

EMPLOYMENT IN TOURISM

One of the main attractions for islanders in developing tourism is the promise of new jobs for locals. The presence

of a large hotel or resort provides many jobs directly to them and boosts employment in construction, retail sales and other services. This has the effect of improving the standard of living for persons employed, and of benefiting the rest of the business community. What is more difficult to determine are the long term effects of removing workers from the local agricultural economy to service the tourist industry, since the food they would otherwise produce must be imported and the nation sacrifices a degree of economic self-sufficiency.

The fact remains, however, that in areas where tourism is controlled chiefly by outside interests, such as in the busiest and most prosperous resort areas of New Caledonia, Fiji and Hawaii, management and other upper level personnel are usually non-islanders. The bulk of positions occupied by locals, such as waiters/waitresses, shop clerks, labourers and maids, tend to be of lower status and, correspondingly, lower pay. The large companies rationalize this job segregation on the basis of costs and esthetics.

Hotel owners claim the cost in time and money of training islanders for administrative jobs is too great, especially when there are many well-trained people from outside the region available to hold these positions. The owners also claim that for "esthetic" reasons, islanders need to be employed in positions where they come in frequent contact with visitors, the rationale being that tourists expect to see native peoples when they visit foreign countries.

SOME SOCIAL IMPACTS

The effects that such tourism has on island societies are varied in degree and desirability. There are both benefits and costs involved for the islands and their peoples. Some of the benefits have already been noted: increased employment, diversification and expansion of the local economy, and increased living standards for some. However, tourism can be a generator of, and contributor to, growing social problems in island societies.

Increased urbanization, whether through heavy commercialization by tourism or other factors, aggravates population pressures as more people crowd into the urban centres. The increasing numbers of tourists add to this problem. Overcrowding stimulates a rise in the crime rate and, to some degree, prostitution, health disorders and drug and alcohol problems. These latter can, in turn, lead to a rise in incidences of domestic violence, suicide, etc. While these problems are not directly attributable to tourism, it can contribute to them.

In places such as Guam, Fiji and Hawaii where tourism has become a major part of the economy, there is growing concern over possible "loss of cultural identity" due to the effects of tourist related commercialization. There is a worry that traditional cultural mores and values will be lost. Some people are casting off their older ways of life in favour of the "new and exciting" lifestyle of the city. While many islanders welcome this change, it does lead to a breakdown of traditional individual and familial roles as people move from the villages to the city.

THE EFFECT OF TOURISM ON THE HANDICRAFT INDUSTRY

The sale of local handicrafts as souvenirs to tourists is one of the mainstays of the industry, but, as with regular retail sales, it is a buyers' market. Consequently, quality is often sacrificed for quantity. In addition, originality, too, falls by the wayside. For example, in Fiji, one of the hottest souvenir items is the trade in carved figures and masks. The carvings are done by Fijian hands, but they are not traditional Fijian art forms. The figures are attempts to capitalize on the Europeans' fancy for dolls and mask designs akin to those from New Guinea. The Fijians carve and sell these items because they feel that they are what travellers expect to see being made.

Similarly, traditional dances performed for tourists undergo various changes by islanders hoping to conform to the expectations of foreigners. Dances are shortened, so that patrons will not become bored, and changed drastically, to make them more interesting. Some performances are even imported from other cultures, the end result being that while these things do provide employment and revenue, the traditional art forms lose their significance and importance in islander life as they are divorced farther and farther from the traditional ways that gave them meaning.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Tourism's effect, especially on the reef systems of some islands, is not as apparent as that of social side-effects, but there are some serious effects, nevertheless.

For instance, tourism development often damages fragile lagoon and coastal environments. Examples are the increase in discharged effluents from hotel sewage systems and the dynamiting of reefs and lagoons to form passages, harbours and recreation areas for travellers. In addition, construction next to the ocean increases siltation which results in the destruction of coral and the absence of small fish species which live in that coral.

While tourism, compared to other forms of resource exploitation, is one of the least damaging industries, sometimes it is the rich, productive land which falls to the developers. This land might otherwise be put to use in farming, an important consideration to island nations where the availability of such land is limited.

CONCLUSION

Because of vulnerable, narrowly-based economies and limited resources, tourism is one of the few major economic growth areas for Pacific Island countries. However, tourism is like a double-edged sword: while the industry provides desperately needed foreign exchange for the purchase of food stuffs and fuel, it does so at the cost of diverting natural and human resources from other, more fundamental developmental needs. And while the economic benefits and social advantages of tourism are apparent, they are sometimes achieved at too great a cost to the people, cultures and environment of the Pacific Islands.

The islands region has become a high-growth area for the tourism industry and the trend will be toward increased tourist numbers. Pressures on Pacific Island cultures and limited infrastructures will increase accordingly. It will be up to island governments and peoples to decide the limits to tourism, and if the trade-offs received are fair and equivalent.

A 42 page reading packet on this subject is also available for \$5.00. Please contact the South Pacific Peoples Foundation of Canada (SPPF) at 409-620 View St., Victoria, B.C. CANADA V8W 1J6.

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Graphic by CAROL MOISEWITCH

Marshallese Radiation Higher Than Estimates



Ellen Boas, a radiation victim from Rongelap.
Photo by Fernando Pereira.

The results of a two-year study of more than 2,000 Marshall Islanders show that the effects of the 1954 Bravo hydrogen bomb may have been underestimated, said a report in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The report, by Dr. Thomas Hamilton, states that 40% of the Rongelap islanders have a thyroid abnormality level 15 times what would be expected under normal conditions. The Rongelap residents, who lived close to Bikini, were exposed to high level fallout from the test. But the report also found health problems among Marshallese living further from the test site, and concluded: "Other Marshall Islands residents exhibit abnormalities at a rate almost directly proportional to their distance from the test site suggesting an absolute radiation risk 33 percent higher than previous estimates by the U.S. Department of Energy." Low government estimates of radiation hazards resulted from the "naive" assumption that only Rongelap and Utrik received significant fallout from the nuclear fallout, said Hamilton, who previously worked for the Marshall Islands Atomic Testing Litigation Project in the Marshalls and is now with the University of Washington. *Giff Johnson*

From: Pacific magazine, Nov-Dec, 1987

PAPEETE BLACK FRIDAY

By Marie-Therese and Bengt Danielsson

For years, the French TV station in Tahiti has run news reports from Beirut showing street violence and burning houses, and this with such a depressing regularity that in the end most of us viewers became totally indifferent. We therefore all received a terrible jolt Friday night 23 October, when an excited speaker announced that the burning city, overrun by hords of looters, which suddenly appeared on our TV screens was not the Lebanese capital but Papeete. When the new day dawned, eighty buildings were totally gutted, 23 shops and offices ravaged by fire and 105 windows smashed. The value of the destroyed and lost property was estimated to be between 5,000 and 7,000 million Pacific francs (\$AUS70 to 100 million).

Admittedly, we had for several days been expecting some trouble, but nothing remotely comparable to a disaster of these dimensions. On the contrary, the troubles seemed to be limited to a rather futile labour dispute between the local dockers and the French Ministry of Defence, who disagreed about the number of men needed to unload the supply ships at the nuclear test island of Moruroa.

But then, on Thursday 22 October, the local press broke the never before heard news story that a group of Polynesian workers employed at Moruroa as boat crews accused their gold-laced bosses of being unfair and dictatorial. The camp commander involuntarily confirmed these charges, because instead of listening to the workers' complaints he ordered a bevy

of heavily armed **gendarmes** to round them up and fly them back to Tahiti where they were dismissed. This was just before a big bomb test was to be made, and not less than 150 civilian workers at Moruroa demonstrated their disapproval of these summary dismissals by refusing to seek protection during the 50 kt blast on the specially built refuge platforms, when ordered to do so.

The same day, the Minister for Defence decreed that all loading and unloading of ships at Moruroa was henceforth to be done exclusively by military personnel. The Polynesian dockers immediately went on strike and were joined by the crews on all inter-island vessels. The dockers and sailors had struck several times before during the past year for the usual reasons, i.e. a more or less justified dissatisfaction with salaries and working conditions; and each time the repercussions had been severe, as they unavoidably must be in an island nation depending almost exclusively on the import not only of manufactured goods but also of food.

It soon became apparent that this unceremonious dismissal of Polynesian workers and dockers was just the opening gambit of a determined drive by the French government to break the power of the dockers' and sailors' unions for good. The next move had already been prepared by the discreet arrival from Paris one week earlier of 150 **garde mobiles**, fully equipped with such riot paraphernalia as tear gas grenades and plastic shields.

When these riot troops suddenly were sent to the Papeete wharves shortly before 5 PM on Friday 23 October, the strikers were quietly sitting in small groups, chatting and playing cards, while their leaders were attending a meeting in the Cowan Stevedoring Company building at the far end of the harbour area. There existed therefore no justification whatsoever for using troops at this stage.

The ultimate proof that the aim of this intervention was, indeed, to provoke an incident that could be politically exploited was the deliberate neglect of the French High Commissioner, Pierre Angeli, to inform in advance the premier of the local government, Jacky Teuira, and the mayor of Papeete, Jean Juventin, - who were both ready to negotiate with the strikers - of his fatal decision to undertake this surprise raid.

Sure enough, the sudden appearance on the wharves of all these heavily armed **gendarmes mobiles** immediately provoked the strikers to start throwing stones at them. They were also, as often has happened in the past on similar occasions, soon joined by hundreds of sympathizers, mostly frustrated Polynesian youths without money, without work, without land, without hope, who poured out from the nearby slum areas. This definitely resembled a riot, and the now extremely mobile gendarmes quickly fired a volley of tear gas grenades at the mob, who slowly retreated along Pomare Avenue bordering the Papeete lagoon.

Having been fed for years with highly informative TV images of street fighting scenes, the rioters used the classical method of overturning and burning cars to slow down the progress of their pursuers. Numerous shop windows, as well as a group of shell vendors' stands, were also smashed during this chase. The rioters next headed for Tarahoi Park, where the High Commissioner's Residence and the Territorial Assembly are located, in all likelihood to seek revenge. But the gendarmes caught up with them in time, and they poured out into General de Gaulle Avenue and fled toward the business blocks surrounding the Catholic Church and the Municipal Market. Still at such a slow pace, however, that they had ample

opportunities of smashing, looting and burning. At the same time, an even bigger crowd of looters was already operating behind the backs of the gendarmes. Somewhat surprisingly, as the owners of the plundered shops found out the following day, the most desirable articles were not food, fuel and clothes, but TV sets, video players, radios, musical cassettes, liquor bottles and cigarettes. We therefore must conclude that even the poorest slum dwellers have by now developed the same unfortunate taste for European luxury items as their more lucky brethren with a fixed job, who unhesitatingly go deep into debt to acquire them.

The principal leaders of the dockers' and sailors' unions, who during these events were trapped in the harbour area, eventually got out around midnight and gathered again in Faaa Town Hall on the invitation of Mayor Oscar Temaru. The following morning, at a public meeting attended by about one thousand people they all denounced in turn "the singular manner in which the colonial power solves social conflicts by dispatching troops." As for the violent acts committed during the night, they definitely condemned them, while at the same time putting the blame squarely on "the oppressive policies adopted by the French government and



faithfully executed by High Commissioner Pierre Angeli". Finally, they protested with the same vigour against "the continued military occupation of the islands, and the pursuit of the lethal nuclear testing programme at Moruroa".

By then 200 **Foreign Legionnaires** had been flown in from Moruroa and occupied the whole harbour area, while 500 more **gendarmes mobiles** were on their way to Tahiti to take up positions in Papeete. A curfew of indefinite duration was moreover imposed from 7 PM to 5 AM in Papeete and the adjacent townships. The poor tourists, who thus became virtual prisoners in their hotel rooms as soon as the sun set, were promised special night passes, but there were few takers, as most of the night clubs, bars and restaurants were closed and the few that stayed open were not allowed to serve any liquor, wine or beer.

As **Tahoeraa** majority leader Gaston Flosse, who is also a member of the French government, saw it, the work was only half done. At his bidding, Premier Jacky Teuira hastily convened the Territorial Assembly to an extra-ordinary session on 29 October in order to "reorganize the stevedoring profession". The first speaker was Flosse's son-in-law, Edouard Fritsch, who, in the name of the party, asked the French government to send out still more troops. Opposition member James Salmon, who was elected on Oscar Temaru's pro-independence ticket, promptly criticized the majority for its narrow-minded approach of seeing the riots solely as a law and order problem and tried to go into the real causes of the perpetual social unrest, the military colonization which all Polynesians find more and more unbearable. And this at a time when practically all other native peoples have achieved independence, in accordance with the famous UN resolutions 1514.

This was blasphemy to the Speaker who intervened and forbade Salmon to make any such "unauthorized digressions". When the latter persisted, the Speaker simply disconnected Salmon's desk microphone.

In accordance with the rules, the **Ia Mana** pro-independence party had tabled well in advance three written motions, and

the spokesman for the party, Jacqui Drollet, therefore was allowed at least to read them. The first asked for the immediate withdrawal of all French **garde mobiles**, while the second proposed the setting of a parliamentary commission to determine the responsibility of all the actors in the Black Friday drama, including the High Commissioner and the military commanders. The third motion simply adjured the majority not to ram through any legislation specifically aiming to crush the dockers.

The majority refused even to discuss the motions, and the **Ia Mana** assemblymen promptly walked out, as did soon almost all the other opposition members, one by one. Flosse and his men did exactly what the opposition had entreated them not to do, i.e. they adopted without further debate a new law making the dockers "public servants". The catch of it was



that it deprived them of the right to strike. For a correct appreciation of the proceedings, we should like to point out here that Flosse's **Tahoeraa** "majority" party in reality only obtained 40% of the votes cast in the March 1986 elections which brought it to power. But thanks to a previous skillful gerrymandering of the constituencies this gave the party 25 seats in the assembly, while the opposition parties, which polled 60% of the votes, only got 16 seats.

Before he left the assembly hall, the mayor of Papeete, Jean Juventin, made an attempt to take advantage of the fact that the whole debate was retransmitted live on TV, by reading a statement, approved by the whole opposition, in which he squarely blamed Flosse and Chirac for the Black Friday troubles. He was immediately cut off by what the TV director later explained away as a "technical accident". Juventin called a



press conference and was even more outspoken, saying that although it was impossible to prove, he was convinced that, on Flosse's instigation, the French military and civilian authorities had deliberately let the conflict degenerate into violence so as to have a good excuse for crushing the dockers.

On another occasion he went so far as to muse: "I cannot help thinking that at the root of the present problem are the superior interests of the French state.

Consequently, the French policy in Polynesia will continue to be based on intimidation, so as to preserve for still some time to come the nuclear test site at Moruroa, with a total disregard for our persons and wishes".

As a chilling confirmation of the correctness of this appraisal of the situation, the French police forces a few days later arrested the four principal leaders of the dockers' and the sailors' unions on the charge of having been "accessory to acts of violence and arson" during Black Friday. At the same time police searched the trade union headquarters with the avowed aim of discovering some incriminating documents justifying the arrests.

Their lawyer, Francois Roux, who flew in the following day from New Caledonia, where he had tried in vain to have the Hienghene murderers convicted, emerged from the Papeete Palace of Justice with a strongly worded protest that the whole thing was a frame up, as it could easily be proved that the trade union leaders had spent the tumultuous hours when the riots took place in the Cowan Stevedoring building at the far end of the harbour area. Incidentally, of the 42 Polynesian youths sentenced so far for looting and pilfering - most of them got a three month term - none are dockers or sailors.

All the while, various French cabinet ministers, foremost among them Gaston Flosse, accused Australia and New Zealand of having supported the Polynesian pro-independence political and trade union leaders, who, according to this official version, had fomented the troubles. The Tahitian weekly magazine MAITO, which is the mouth piece of the French right wing expats, was even more specific, for it singled out as the main culprit the Australian consul in New Caledonia, Miss Meredith Schroeder, who happened to visit Tahiti just before the riots. According to the magazine, this cannot have been a simple coincidence.

High commissioner Angeli chimed in by declaring repeatedly to the crowds of journalists who flocked to Tahiti to find out what had gone wrong in paradise that

"the arsonists were well prepared, well organized and acted in a determined and not at all spontaneous manner". The strongest rebuttal of this conspiracy theory came from the two most influential religious leaders, Chairman Jacques Ihorai of the Evangelical Church and Catholic Bishop Michel Coppenrath, whose churches total about 90% of the 175,000 population in French Polynesia.

Both maintained in unequivocal language that such wild accusations served only to divert attention from the real causes of all the social unrest Tahiti has known during the past twenty years, i.e. since the nuclear testing bases were established, and of which the Black Friday riots were only a particularly ugly manifestation. These obvious causes, which they had often decried in the past, they said are the anger and the exasperation felt by the countless Tahitians, who have sadly witnessed their country being taken over by an army of French soldiers, policemen, gendarmes and bureaucrats, and an even bigger hord of 30,000 civilian settlers, who all have prospered, while they themselves have sunk down to the level of materially and culturally impoverished slum dwellers.

When it was officially announced on 12 November that High Commissioner Angeli had been relieved, some news commentators took this to mean that he had been disowned. Unfortunately, there can be no doubt that the Minister for Overseas Territories Bernard Pons spoke the truth, when he hastened to declare publicly that he was very satisfied with the way Angeli had done the job, and that it just so happened that his time was up. This interpretation is moreover confirmed by the fact that Angeli's successor is another colonial proconsul, Jean Montpezat, who during the past fifteen months has worked with the same zeal as Angeli to keep the lid firmly screwed on the colonial worm can in New Caledonia. There is thus every reason to believe that similar social explosions will continue to occur in Tahiti.



MENTAL HEALTH PLANS LONG TERM RESPONSE TO SUICIDES

Suicide has killed more individuals during 1987 than any single illness in the Marshall Islands. It has reached epidemic levels with 19 Marshallese taking their lives through November: 59 young people have committed suicide since 1980. The 1987 level is nearly 20 times the U.S. rate for youth in the same age group.

A well attended suicide intervention workshop in May raised community awareness, resulting in more reports of attempted suicides and more individuals coming to Mental Health for counselling.

As another step in the ongoing effort that began in May, Mental Health prepared a special report with a series of short & long term recommendations for action, seeking national leaders to intervene publicly to halt the epidemic with the message that "Young people need to know that this country cares for them because they are Marshallese, that they are the most important resource this country has and that it is recognized that they are going through difficult changing times."

"If young people believe that their future is unsure, then their job is to create it and mold it. It is not to quit."

In the long term, Mental Health is working towards:

- * increasing counselling in schools, churches and Mental Health to deal with young people in crisis,
- * educating parents and the community to changing expectations and needs of young people,
- * helping parents develop new strategies to cope more effectively with family problems,
- * developing programs for young people to deal with day to day crises and stressful situations,
- * reinforcing and strengthening the uniqueness and necessity of Marshallese culture.

[From: EJMOUR, No. 3, November 1987, a primary health care newsletter in the Marshall Islands.]

FIJIAN INDIAN VIEWPOINT

By **UMENDRA SINGH**, an Indo-Fijian on staff at the *Seattle Times* and, until June 1987, with the *Fiji Times*.

The Russians call it 'maskirovka'. It means doing something outrageous, blaming it on your opponents and then reacting strongly to the "outrageous incident".

The two military coups in Fiji are the Fijian version of maskirovka, and it has worked.

When the Alliance Party in Fiji lost power in April of 1987, after 17 years of governing, the defeated Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, said democracy was alive and well in Fiji and then he and his Alliance Party leaders set in motion the events of the Fijian maskirovka which climaxed with the first military coup on May 14. The maskirovka was repeated around September 25 for the second coup.

The Alliance Party is made up of hereditary chiefs and big businessmen who were shocked that a political party made up of commoners and factory workers - the Fiji Labour Party - had defeated them in the general election. More shocking was the realization that the new government was conducting investigations into certain shady deals conducted by ministers of the old government.

What also pushed them into putting in motion the maskirovka was the fact that these chiefs and businessmen could not envisage living without total political control over the country they had ruled for 17 years since independence from Britain in 1970.

One of the top cabinet ministers in the old Alliance government, Apisai Tora, was given the task of starting the maskirovka. He re-named a section of the Alliance Party the "Taukei Movement" and started a campaign of terror. He and his other Alliance Party colleagues threw petrol bombs in some offices, led protest marches against the new government and put up road blocks. They claimed that the new government was controlled by Indians.

Fiji has a population of 715,000 made up of 49 percent Indians, who are descendants of labourers brought by the British to work in the cane fields of Fiji 120 years ago, and 47 percent native Fijians. The remaining 4 percent are Europeans and Chinese. Under Fiji's constitution, the Parliament is made up of 22 Fijian elected members, 22 Indian elected members and eight general electors or Europeans, Chinese or anyone who is not an Indian or a Fijian. This British designed electoral system ensured no one race would dominate the other. No matter who won the general election or who became the Prime Minister, there would always be 22 Indians, 22 Fijians and eight general electors in Parliament.

The less powerful Senate has at least 50 percent native Fijian membership at any one time and about 80 percent Fijian membership most times under the constitution now suspended by the Army.

The government elected on April 11, 1987 and deposed on May 14 had 14 cabinet ministers, made up of seven Indians and

seven Fijians. The new prime minister, Dr. Timoci Bavadra, was a native Fijian.

Tora, also a hereditary village chief, and his Taukei movement started burning offices and shops of Indians and Tora was eventually charged with arson and sedition. But the reign of terror continued.

When Lt. Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka stormed into Parliament with his troopers at 10 AM on May 14, he first said he wanted to protect the Indian people from the reign of terror being mounted by the Taukei movement (not unlike Haiti where soldiers in speeding cars first shot at voters and then the Army High Command took over the country to "protect" the people).

But when he appointed members of the Taukei movement and the Alliance Party to his 20-member Council of Ministers, the maskirovka was out in the open. Rabuka, Ratu Mara and Tora had conspired to mount a reign of terror by Taukei members and then stage a coup on the pretext of protecting the Indian population from the Taukei movement.

Later on, Rabuka gave a number of other reasons for the coup - he feared Fijians would lose their land; he feared Indian domination; he feared the new government would have close links with Russia and Libya; he feared that there would be no peace and order in the country and finally, he now believes he was appointed by God to stage the coup.

Fijians own 87 percent of all land in Fiji and under Fiji's laws no one can buy their land. The native lands, as they are known, can only be leased. Indians have been in Fiji for 120 years and have never dominated the country in anyway except in business. Although they make up close to half of the population of the country and provide 70 percent of the total taxes, the Indians never had any real political clout. For 17 years under Mara, there were only two Indians in Mara's cabinet of 18 and these two were not very highly regarded by the Indian community. The Indian community does not own any large tracts of land and most Indian farmers lease land from Fijians.

After making false allegations about Bavadra's leanings towards Libya and the Soviet Union, Rabuka himself approached Libya for a \$60 million soft loan and appealed for help from the Soviet Union when the United States withdrew its support from Rabuka.

Ironically, two of Fiji's closest allies, the United States and China, were happy with the government being overthrown. The United States got off to a bad start with the government of Dr. Bavadra who had banned all nuclear powered and armed vessels from Fiji ports. With the appointment of Alliance leaders in Rabuka's cabinet, the United States had high hopes that its nuclear warships could again roam the Pacific waters at will, using Fiji ports for stopovers. There is strong suspicion that the United States, or at least the CIA, helped plan the coup.

China was always close to Ratu Mara, the defeated prime minister, and was pleased that he was back in power with the help of Rabuka.

After the first coup, the Governor General, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, (a former deputy of Mara's and nominated as Queen's representative in Fiji by Mara) claimed that he had taken charge. He promptly pardoned Rabuka and his colleagues although they had not been formally charged and convicted. He managed to work out a compromise between Bavadra and Mara and proposed an alternative "government of national unity" instead of Rabuka's dictatorship.

Rabuka and Mara, unhappy with this deal, planned a second coup on September 25. Unlike the first one, which was a surprise, half the country knew that a second coup was on the way. Bavadra warned Ratu Sir Penaia a week in advance that the army was planning a takeover again. But Penaia failed to take any preventative action.

Rabuka put into action another maskirovka just before the second coup. He released 150 of the worst convicts from the Naboro prison and they went on a rampage of terror along with Toras' Taukeis. They went a step further than the Cuban prisoners in the United States.

After burning and looting, the convicts met Rabuka's soldiers at a pre-arranged spot. Rabuka's soldiers then escorted the convicts on a protest march through the capital city ending at the Governor General's official residence. They protested to Ratu Sir Penaia that they did not want Dr. Bavadra to have any say in the governing of the country and dined with the Governor General before returning to the prison. This must have been the first time in the history of this world that convicts had a hand in overturning the will of the voters.

The second coup then took place and Rabuka again explained that he had taken control to restore law and order.

Ratu Sir Penaia has since given up his position as Governor General but is still occupying the official residence and is considering an offer to become a figurehead president in Rabuka's regime [He accepted in December. Ed.]. Rabuka has appointed a cabinet of the worst possible kind (one of his cabinet ministers is suggesting that Fiji should go back to what it was 200 years ago - a primitive society - with no contact with the outside world). The regime seems to have no idea at all of the economic backlash of their policies. When questioned about the finances of the country, the usual reply is that "we can go back to living as our forefathers did 200 years ago".

The regime has imposed strict regulation about movements of people and people of all religions are being forced to bow to Christianity. Rabuka has decreed that no one should do anything on Sundays except go to church. Non-Christians caught shopping, visiting or even working in their backyards are severely beaten.

Indians were portrayed as the main losers in the two coups. But the average Fijian lost much more - he lost his basic right to think for himself and to do what he wants. The British nurtured the traditional Fijian chiefly system under which various Fijian chiefs control the lives of the average Fijians from their daily lifestyle to who they vote for. Chiefs traditionally tell commoners whom

to vote for (for the chiefs). And no one goes against the wishes of the chiefs. But in recent years there have been changes - some commoners started voting for people they thought deserved their votes and not whom the chiefs thought were good. This trend reached a climax this year when a "commoner", Dr. Bavadra defeated Fiji's highest chief, Ratu (designation of a chief) Sir Kamisese Mara to become the Prime Minister. The chiefs could not stomach this. They saw this as the beginning of a social revolution which would end the chiefs control over the lives of the commoners. It meant loss of immense monetary and political benefits for the chiefs. With their leader, Mara, the chiefs supported the coup. The Great Council of Chiefs, which under the constitution is designated as an advisory body made up of respected elders, has become almost a political party of hotheads.

Fiji's problem is similar to many third world countries in the Pacific, Asia and African regions, the problem of leaders who refuse to give up power and subjugate their people. In other words, these countries have replaced their colonial masters with local dictators who are far more ruthless than the colonials ever were.

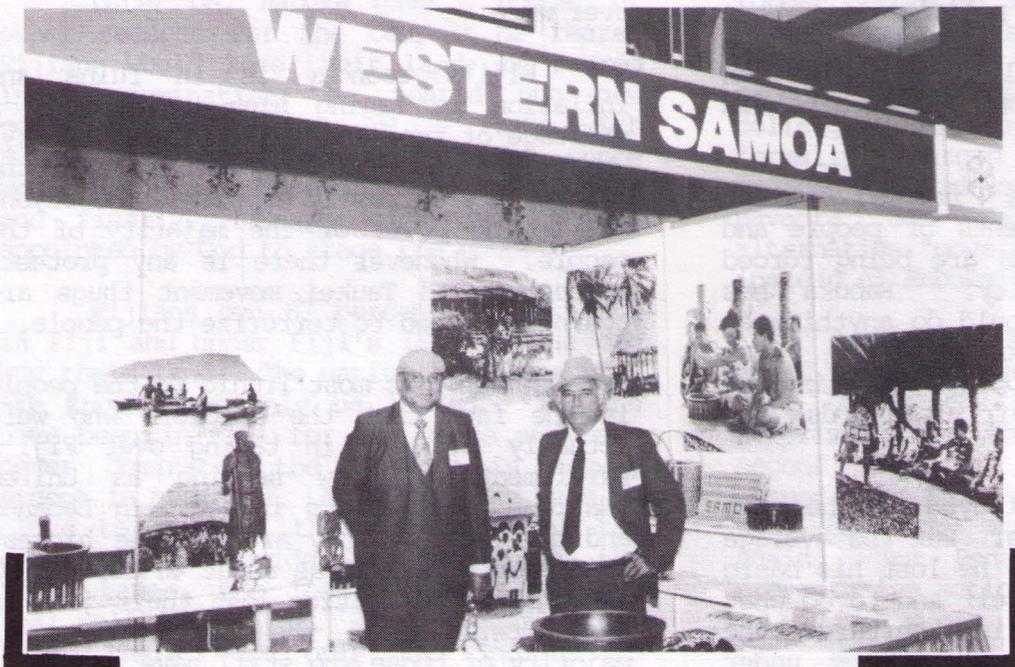
Fiji's economy is in ruins and inflation is raging high. There is a shortage of food and money in the country. Whatever foodstuffs are available in the country are extremely expensive and beyond the buying power of the majority of the people. Whenever there is any protest, prisoners and Taukei movement thugs are again unleashed to terrorize the people.

What seems most ironic to the people is the fact that the soldiers who were actually involved in taking over Fiji's Parliament are now serving as United Nations peacekeepers in southern Lebanon and the Sinai. They are now the highest paid people in Fiji as about 40 percent of the working population lost their jobs in the aftermath of the two coups. A majority of those who still have work have had their salaries reduced.

Only those employed by the United Nations in the Middle East have safe jobs and high pay - and they are responsible for all the problems.

Island Crafts at CHOGM

A "small states exposition" was held in unison with the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Vancouver in October. At right, Georges Joe of Melanesian Shell Products (Vanuatu) displays a bracelet made from a trochus shell. The Western Samoan exhibitors (below) were at their first ever trade exposition. Other participants, all of whom moved on to Toronto for one week after Vancouver, included Papua New Guinea, Kiribati, the Solomon Islands, and Fiji.



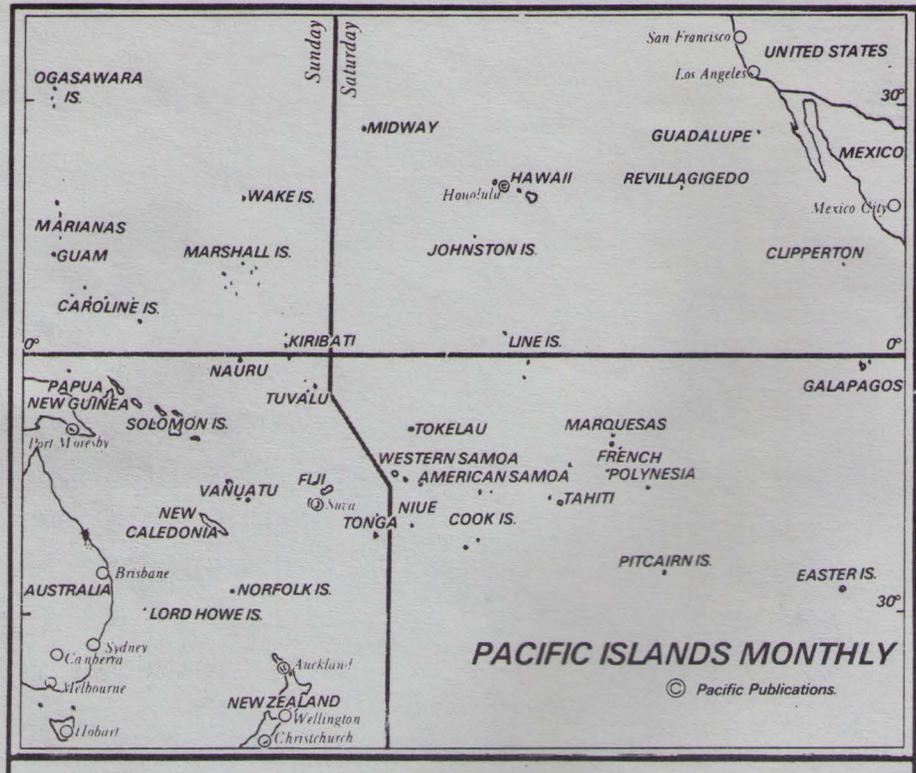
ISLAND MAPS: The Center for Pacific Island Studies, University of Hawaii, has produced four maps, one of which is reproduced on page opposite. Others are: 200 mile economic zones; political entities; and a general map of the islands. Cost is 50¢ each from the Center, 1890 E-W Rd., Moore Hall 215, U of H, Honolulu, HI, USA 96822. Cheques to: "Center for Pacific Island Studies, UH." 



CULTURE AREAS OF THE PACIFIC

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