Tok Blong SPPF

A Quarterly of News and Views on the Pacific Islands

January 1989 #26

photo by Elaine Briere

"Where the Hell is Ebeye" – A Look at Kwajalein Atoll

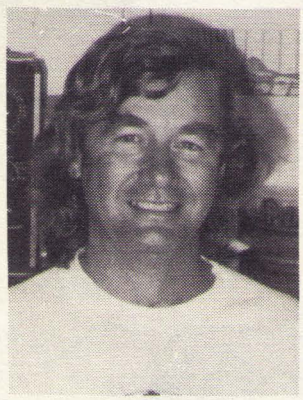
Also . . . Update on Vanuatu Power Struggle
. . . Cousteau Report Released: Questions Raised
. . . Aid: A Pacific Perspective
. . . Rainforests in the Solomon Islands

BELAU: Future Remains Uncertain

Seven people ran for President in the November 2 election. The unofficial winner is Ngiratkel Etpison with 2392 votes out of the over 9000 cast. Second was Roman Tmetuchl only 31 votes back. Tmetuchl, with support of three other contestants, has filed a legal challenge citing voter irregularities. Etpison is a Compact supporter, and is certain to lead Belau down the same road President Salii had taken: get the Compact [Read: $'s] even if it costs the constitution and the country's sovereignty. Tmetuchl was supported by pro-constitution forces. We hope to have final news of the legal challenge in our next Tok Blog SPPF.

PHIL ESMONDE LEAVING SPPF IN SEPTEMBER

Phil Esmonde will be leaving the Executive Directorship of SPPF in September to concentrate on other pursuits. These include photography and writing. Phil will also be seeking contracts and consultancies in development work, organizing and communications related to the Pacific Islands and other areas. His prime focus will remain social justice oriented.



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.

GARBAGE BY THE TON

Pacific Island countries continue to be possible dumping sites for the consumer world's garbage. The Marshall Islands government appears to be "buying into" one scheme of the "trash salesmen" from North America. The following article is from the **MARSHALL ISLANDS JOURNAL and was reprinted in PACIFIC NEWS BULLETIN**, Vol 3 No 8 November 1988.

An American company is proposing to use Bokak (Taongi) Atoll's lagoon in the Marshall Islands as the site to dispose of millions of tons of solid waste from the United States.

The company, **ADMIRALTY PACIFIC INC.** of Washington, said in its proposal that "Local Marshallese government cooperation has been assured in writing for the completion of studies, correcting any unforeseen problems, and immediately commencing a landfill on the Taongi Atoll."

However, both Marshll Islands government Chief Secretary Oscar deBrum and Foreign Secretary Jiba Kabua, who is also chairman of the Environmental Protection Authority, said they had not seen a proposal on this project.

The US State Department office said it heard of the proposal about three months ago from a Hawaii-based organisation. When the Foreign Ministry was contacted, they said they were aware of the proposal but that it would need Nitijela [Marshall Islands legislature] and government approval.

The proposal includes a power of attorney document apparently signed by Irooj [traditional leader] Murjel Hermios who gives Robert F. Moore power to act on his behalf for the development of Taongi.

"Admiralty Pacific Inc., in conjunction with municipal governments in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, has instigated a unique solution to the problems of Solid Waste Disposal," says the project proposal.

While waste accumulates at a rapid pace in the U.S., landfill dumps are quickly being shut down. The U.S. has failed to find an "acceptable, workable solution for the nation's refuse problems."

The Pacific coast produces about 25 million tons of waste a year. But California will close most of its landfills by 1993 and Spokane, Washington has a "drinking water pollution problem", said the proposal. Most of the nation is in a "critical dilemma" over where to put its solid waste, said the proposal.

"Parallel to the need for replacement of landfills in the U.S. is the need for landmass in the Marshall Islands".

Landfills have been used to create and improve land. By transporting "bio-mass" to "fill in a lagoon", just one landfill would double the total useable landmass in the Marshalls, according to the proposal.

Taongi has been identified as the first landfill in the Marshalls, according to the report. The solid waste would be dumped in the lagoon.

The company said it has completed a preliminary operating plan for moving garbage (solid waste) to the Marshalls. Long term contracts can be immediately signed "if a reliable resource of disposal can be assured."

An estimated 3,500,000 tons of waste (carried on six ships) would be disposed the first year, with up to 25,000,000 tons by the fifth year.

The proposal said no toxic or hazardous waste would be involved. The company estimates net income the first year at more than $27 million. It calls the Marshalls option a "win-win solution" to the pressing garbage problems in the U.S.

Although the landfill concept is the basis for the project, the proposal says that "it is essential that the total development of the Ratak chain be paramount."

The power of attorney agreement signed by Hermios says that Moore will undertake investigations to put Taongi to productive

use, "including creation of a sportsman's fishing retreat (including for example, harbour, docks, boat service facilities, hotel accommodations, golf course and other amenities)..."

In addition, he is authorised to enter into contracts for dredging, landfill and construction and to obtain financing. As compensation for his work on behalf of Hermios, Moore "shall be entitled to receive 50% of all net income derived from the development and or use of the Atoll...for a term of 55 years."

It was signed in September 1987.

[Editorial Note: In late October 1988 the Marshall Islands government gave approval for Admiralty Pacific to begin engineering studies.]

MARSHALL ISLANDS POPULATION GROWS BY 40% IN EIGHT YEARS

The Marshall Islands is one of the fastest growing nations in the world, according to the results of the national census conducted by the Marshall Islands. The population has hit 43,335, a 40% jump over the 1980 population of just over 30,000. Census Commissioner Wimal Nanayakara said that the average annual growth rate since 1980 was 4.24%.

The preliminary statistics also confirm the trend of rapid migration from the outer islands to urban centres in the Marshalls. In 1980, 58% of Marshall Islanders lived in Majuro and Ebeye, the two urban centres. Today, that total has risen to 64% crowded into less than three square miles of land.

Majuro, the capital, with 19,695 residents has nearly 50% of the total population. The census shows that about 75% of the Majuro population is crowded into the downtown area, giving it the highest population density in the atoll nation.

An average of 9.5 people live in every home in Majuro, according to the reports. Majuro grew more than 67% since the last census, an increase more than three times the growth rate on outer islands.

The week-long census was conducted in mid-November. It was the first time the Marshalls government has surveyed its population. The United Nations Population Fund assisted the government with the census.

[From **PACIFIC REPORT**, Issue Number 20, December 22, 1988]

AID: A SOUTH PACIFIC PERSPECTIVE

By Epeli Hau'ofa

This paper was delivered to an Australian-sponsored seminar for senior planning officers from South Pacific countries in Canberra, Australia, March/April 1985. Although a few years old, the points remain only too relevant. Epeli Hau'ofa teaches at the University of the South Pacific in Suva.

I accepted this invitation to address this seminar because I wanted to come here and exorcise a ghost. For many years up to 1982 I was involved directly with activities related to aid and development. That involvement eventually got me so disillusioned and distressed that, in order to preserve my sanity, I had to withdraw and retreat into the best of all escapists' worlds - the protected ivory tower of academia, vowing never again to be involved intimately in anything that smells of aid or development. Of course, when one lives in a Third World region such as the South Pacific islands, one cannot really escape from aid or development; the best that one can hope for is to maintain some distance and to deal with these activities peripherally. For two years I was cocooned in my ivory tower until a couple of weeks ago when I was invited to present my views on aid to this seminar.

If I were to choose a title for my talk I would call it **There is No Such Thing as Aid,** or perhaps **The Distortion of Reality by the Word Aid.** I say this very seriously, with due respect to all who are involved directly with aid activities and with a sincere desire to be constructive. I'm not going to argue along the line that there is no such thing as a free lunch - that is trivial. My interest is with the bases of our relationships - and that is far from being trivial. I wish to advance the view that the word aid is a misnomer, that it distorts the reality of our relationships, that it perpetuates the feelings of superiority and inferiority fostered initially during the period of colonialism, that it helps to maintain paternalism in the relationships between communities and between sections of communities, that it contributes to the erosion of the sense of self-respect that people have of themselves as individuals or as groups, and that it leads to all kinds of cynical and corrupt practices. The well known problem of dependence mentality is inextricably woven into the connotations and applications of the word aid and all those other terms associated with it, such as **donor**, recipient, **gift**, grants-in-aid and so forth. The term also misleads the taxpayers of the so-called donor countries into thinking that large amounts of their hard-earned money are being given away to help underprivileged foreigners while their own poor are being deprived. There is nothing more ridiculous and sad than the sight of a land-cruiser or a mini-bus with the following words printed on its sides: `This vehicle is a gift by the People of (so-and-so country) to the People of (so-and-so country).'

All of us in our various communities have long ago been drawn into a single economic system controlled by international industrial, commercial and financial corporations, and backed and defended by powerful governmental and military organisations working in cooperation with each other. Once in the system it is virtually impossible for most countries to opt out of it. Examples of this in recent years have been the events in Grenada and Nicaragua, and within the other economic camp, earlier events in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and more recently, in Poland and Afghanistan. In our own region whenever a small Pacific island country talks of dialogue with the other economic grouping, temperatures rise dramatically in Canberra, Wellington and Washington.

For the smooth functioning and survival of our system economic activities have been increasingly coordinated in various centres of control, and necessary resources for development are being allocated and distributed from these centres to the component communities. Our

being here this week is a good example of what I'm talking about. The ultimate aim in all this coordination and distribution is to ensure the survival of the system. Who benefits most or who benefits least from the system is a very important issue which I will not touch upon this morning for I want to emphasise a particular point. Without the essential allocation and distribution for various purposes including the development in the productive and services sectors of the component communities, the system itself would not function well and would perhaps collapse.

To call this essential flow aid is therefore to distort reality. We are not dealing in any way whatsoever with gifts and handouts; we are dealing with necessities, the requirements of our system. If we accept this perspective. then we can see that some communities, such as the South Pacific island nations, are not really asking for assistance or aid but are in fact negotiating for their rightful dues from scarce common resources. Conversely, those communities like Australia, New Zealand, the United States of America, Japan and the like, are not aid-givers but controllers of essential resource allocation and distribution within the system. In talking about the system I deliberately use the term `communities' rather than `countries'; there is an important difference between these terms in the context in which I am using them.

In saying what I have just said, I do not wish to deny the humanitarian considerations that underlie some of the flow of resources within the system; but, rather, that these are secondary to other more pressing considerations.

I believe that the word `aid' and its contemporary connotations arose during those bad old days of colonialism, especially in the period of decolonisation when imperial powers poured in large amounts of resources to develop their overseas territories in order to keep them within the capitalist camp, and to ensure the security of their investments and influence after independence. These actions have been successful in keeping most of the newly independent countries aligned to the capitalist camp. They persist today under the word aid.

The term aid not only camouflages reality, it also perpetuates the superiority and inferiority complexes forged during the era of colonialism in the relationships between communities and individuals within the system. And as long as parts of the essential transfer of resources within the system are categorised as aid, the dependence mentality with its destructive and erosive effects on people's and communities' sense of self-respect will continue to intensify. It has bred much bitterness, cynicism and corruption in many communities. There are those in the so-called recipient communities who have shelved their sense of independent existence and have adapted themselves to the condition of dependence as a natural order of things. There are also those who were born into dependence and know no other way of existence. In these people aid is no problem whatsoever. But they cannot be taken for granted, for the growing concern about the negative effects of aid is reaching their minds.

On the other hand, those who consider themselves donors often resent what is being done with their so-called grants and so-called gifts, and this breeds bitterness, cynicism and devious practices such as giving with one hand and taking back more with the other.

It is also in the human nature that the giver feels superior to the receiver, and that the constant giver eventually develops negative sentiments against the always-receiver. One may feel pity for a beggar, one never respects the beggar. Conversely, those who are always at the receiving end tend also to resent the giver, at times because of the perceived insensitivity in the giver's behaviours and at times because of the recipients' realisation of their inability to reciprocate. In the South Pacific island societies as elsewhere balanced reciprocity is a prerequisite for healthy relationships between individuals and communities. Most of the disillusioned, cynical and bitter people that I have met in the islands have been aid personnel from donor countries and local officials who deal with them. These groups of people constantly have to compromise their sense of integrity in their dealings with

each other on matters related to aid and development.

Characterisation of essential flows of resources as aid makes it easier for certain communities to be mean about the amounts they supposedly give, or to channel them so cleverly that hardly anything gets to the so-called recipients. Because of the common belief that such resources are theirs, it is so much easier for donors to turn the tap at will, and so much more difficult for recipients to bargain for more because ultimately they have no right to demand anything. It is a shameful thing to appear to ask too much too often.

The term also justifies the abrogation of the control of essential resource allocation and distribution by certain communities. In this way the old inequalities between communities within the system are perpetuated and even widened.

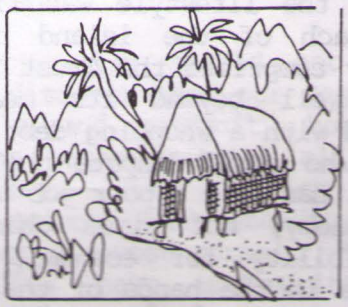
Aid is also widely considered to be conscience money given to allay feelings of guilt on the part of those who have so much in the midst of so much poverty. Some recipients think that they deserve all the aid they can get because of some wrong committed to innocent ancestors by nasty colonialists. As long as things are called **aid** these recriminations will persist.

The intensifying discussion of aid and its deleterious effects has led an increasing number of people to think that the whole thing should be scrapped altogether by striving, at least in intent, for the utopia of self-sufficiency. At the same time it is most difficult for both the so-called donors and the so-called recipients to do away with aid. The fact that has not been clearly understood is that you cannot dispense with the requirements of the system. So we are left in a bind from which we can escape only if we admit truthfully that we are not dealing with aid but with the coordination and control of the essential flows of resources. In that way our relationships will be seen not so much as those between sovereign states but rather those between member communities of a single economic grouping. Moreover our relationships will be viewed not as those between givers and takers but between toilers in the same vineyard.

In view of what I have said, I suggest that we do away with the word aid and other related terms because they are gross misrepresentations and distortions of reality, and because they are harmful. Words are powerful conditioners of human thought, emotions and behaviours. False representations of reality can cause incalculable damage to people's well-being. We have seen this over and over in the tragic events of our contemporary history. We should search for words that reflect the true nature of our relationships. In doing so we will be able to cure ourselves of the dependence mentality, and to promote in all of us a real sense of equality. We are all in a single economic grouping in which we have hierarchies of rights to certain available resources. These rights are analogous to the rights to land in the traditional tenure systems in the Pacific islands. Individuals and groups have different kinds of rights to the same tracts of land from which they obtain their livelihood. These rights are arranged hierarchically: there are major rights such as those to transfer other rights or to inherit; and there are minor rights such as those of usufruct and harvest of specified crops.

If we discard the notion of aid, we will be able to view our reality with greater clarity, to negotiate more honestly for equitable distribution of scarce resources, and to mobilise and use these resources more wisely because they are ours by right and not handouts from others.

[Reprinted from SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM 2(2):182-188, December 1985]



LET'S HAVE THE MEAL TODAY RATHER THAN THE FISHING INDUSTRY TOMORROW

By: Francis X. Hezel, S.J., Micronesian Seminar, Truk, F.S.M.

Is there something that legislators, magistrates and other elected officials in Micronesia see that the rest of us are missing? This may explain why many of those charged with overseeing development funds under the Compact [of Free Association with the U.S.] are busily appropriating this money for seawalls, community houses, docks and other pork barrel projects as if these were still the Trust Territory days of the 70s. Perhaps they are reading the economic surveys of the Pacific written by Australians who declare that all of the Pacific island nations, with the exception of Nauru and one or two other mineral-rich countries, are doomed to be economic "basket cases" without continuing substantial foreign aid. Possibly these leaders have simply abandoned any hope of any real economic productivity and have resigned themselves (and their people) to perpetual dependence on a Western power.

For years now the charge has been repeated that the U.S. has left the economy of the Micronesian states in miserable shape despite that nation's mandate under the Trusteeship Agreement to provide for the economic development of the islands. The condition in which the U.S. left the economy at the termination of trusteeship, some critics maintain, is even worse than it was when the U.S. first took over the war-crippled islands. Then at least the islands fed themselves and provided for most of their basic needs, even if the lifestyle was frugal, while today each of the island nations that formerly comprised the Trust Territory is living well beyond its means and is burdened with a whopping debt. I know of no one who would dispute the charge that the U.S. has done a poor job of developing the economy, but times change and the responsibility for economic development now lies in the hands of the new nations themselves.

There was a point in history, not too many years ago, when Micronesian and U.S. negotiators seemed to genuinely believe that it was possible to build a sound economy on the resource base that the small islands and the seas surrounding them held. They agreed on a Compact funding plan that would provide not only governmental operation costs but large sums of capital that could be invested in development projects to stimulate productivity in the Micronesian economies. U.S. assistance might be required to supplement their resource base for some years, but in gradually decreasing amounts as the local economies grew stronger. The hope was that in time the island nations would generate most of the money required to support their own governments.

But time and lassitude and old habits have a way of eroding such ideals. The money originally earmarked for development under the Compact came to be regarded as a continuation of the Capital Improvement Projects funding of the 70s with its emphasis on roads, electrification, docks and the usual monuments to progress, regardless of their real impact on the economy. Some leaders, no doubt, believed that when the day finally arrived that the infrastructure was in place, a line of potential investors from overseas with money in hand would form to provide the business ideas and capital needed to fuel the long anticipated economic turn-around. But has this really happened anywhere in the world? Isn't it more often the case that the infrastructure once grandly thought to be the necessary condition of economic productivity instead becomes just another consumer item raising the costs of government and popular expectations for services?

The original concept of the development fund was swept still further

downstream as funds were parceled out to municipalities for allocation. After all, most magistrates had been habituated during the 1960s and 70s to look to government funds for sea walls and community houses, benjoes and water catchment systems.

In some areas, political expediency seems to have required that at least a portion of the development money be distributed to the municipalities for their use. Municipal authorities argued that for too long now the states have monopolized development money for their own centralized use. The towns usually benefit from the improvements, they maintain, while the outlying areas have nothing to show for the funds. "Share the wealth" is the cry of those in the villages now that development money has become available in generous amounts on a year by year basis. In response to the political demands of magistrates and other local officials, therefore, the money has been allocated to municipalities. Now a municipal area with a population of a few hundred people finds itself with over $100,000 each year in development projects.

The results are predictable. Although guidelines for the use of this development money are elaborated by state-level planners, the sum allocated to a municipality may well exceed its ability to absorb this money within a year's time. After all, how many medium-size agricultural projects and fishing operations can a small population sustain? When the money for real basic development is allocated, there often remains a generous sum still to be spent. The temptation is to distribute this for tools, animal feed, and other incidentals that effectively inflate the start-up cost of the project even as they provide fringes for those employed. The net effect is to make projects so costly that others are inhibited from emulating what might otherwise have been a reasonable model for village development. Moreover, the municipal authorities have priorities of their own, often only marginally related to what the development money is intended to do. Their concern is often the establishment of water catchments, sanitation facilities, passenger boats, roads and docks -- projects that will enhance the short-term quality of life in the village and provide the trappings of modernization that villagers feel they have been denied in the past. These concerns often eclipse the higher-level but much less immediately felt need to increase production so as to create a viable economy in the future.

Then there is the concern for jobs. Why should the people simply relinquish their windfall in favour of long-range development projects when there is such rampant unemployment in the villages today? Why not take the money and convert it into salary income for at least some of the subsistence-level villagers? In other words, why go to the trouble of developing a fishing industry when the people need fish (perhaps even store-bought fish) right away? And so, in lieu of salaried jobs, a hundred families are given outright grants of $1500 apiece from funds that are earmarked for "commercial fishing development". The money is spent and the village remains no better off in the end than it ever was. Thus, people reverse the hallowed old maxim of development and accept the meal today rather than the fishing industry that they might have had tomorrow. In so doing, of course, they take still another step away from the economic development that their Compact envisioned and their planners call for.

The obstacles to furthering economic development on the municipal level seem to be almost insurmountable. What is harder to understand, however, is how congressmen and legislators, who should know better, can continue to dispense much-needed funds as they used to in the Trust Territory days a decade ago for seawalls, community houses and other pork-barrel projects that contribute little or nothing to the economy. Worse still, they do this at a time when the governments are struggling with large debts even as they try to gain the confidence of their own people and the world at large.

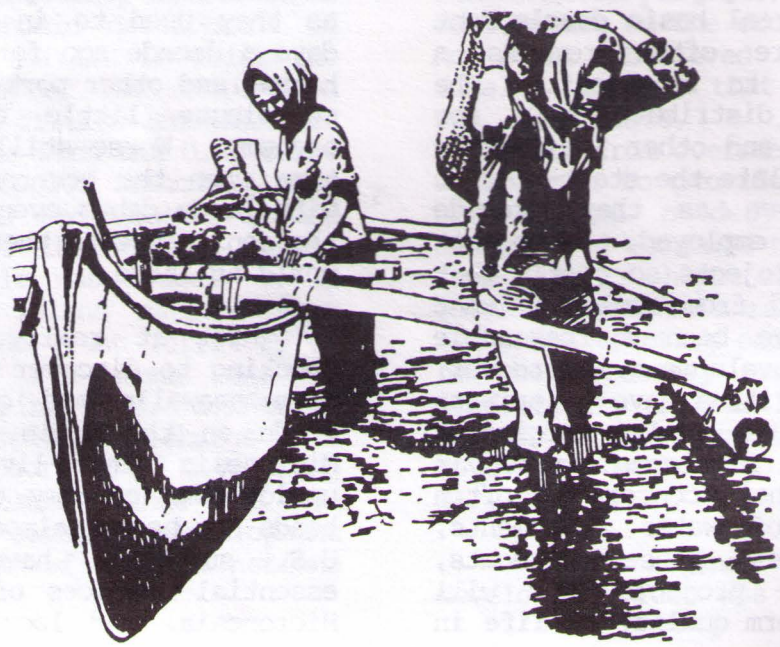
Yet it really should not be too shocking to discover that our legislators have seawalls and community houses and roads on the brain. After all, we in Micronesia have lived so long in an upside-down economy that standing on our heads has become almost normal. For years U.S. subsidies have underwritten the essential services of the governments in Micronesia, and local revenues could be

squandered on seawalls that crumbled two years after they were built or on hiring employees for political patronage purposes. Government spending, funded from overseas, has always supported such private sector economic activity as may occur, and after a while it is hard to remember that in the rest of the world the relationship between private and public sectors is reversed. "What's wrong with all this?" island leaders might well ask, for the only economic world they have ever known has always operated this way. They can be pardoned for ignoring long-term developmental concerns in favour of docks, passenger boats and other conveniences, since they have come to believe that there will always be someone around to catch us when we fall before we come to financial disaster.

Whether or not we realize it, times have changed. The U.S. seems to have taken a firmer stance on Micronesian matters, as is clear in its dealings with Palau on the anti-nuclear provision in the Palau Constitution and its persistence in withdrawing federal grants for college education. Many Micronesian officials, hoping for last-minute concessions from the U.S., were taken by surprise when the U.S. insisted on the provisions that had been negotiated. It could be argued that a future, more liberal administration in Washington will soften in its handling of financial matters in Micronesia, but this is a chancey hope. Washington, it might be expected, has learned a few things in the course of its dealings with these islands. One of its foremost lessons must have been that fiscal responsibility and good management can only be learned when nation states are held to the consequences of their financial decisions. It is in the long-term interests of neither the U.S. nor the new nations of Micronesia for Washington to continue to bail out the island governments.

The clock is now running and the Micronesian governments. have 14 years to make something of these economies. In that time they will have to produce a greater measure of what people need to live, or the money to pay for it, or else they will have to strike a new and possible less favorable deal with the U.S. to increase the subsidy. That would almost certainly entail a surrender of some of the political autonomy that the islands now possess. Political autonomy can seem an abstraction unless we link it to the realities of local control over land, immigration and other critical issues that even now rankle some of our less autonomous neighbors to the north.

It's high time that the Micronesian states got out of the dream world that we've all inhabited for years and concentrate seriously on moving the economy forward — at least if we haven't despaired altogether of real economic development. It may be that the U.S. did very little by way of economic development in these islands for the last forty years, but the local record doesn't look too impressive either at this point. ✡



WHERE THE HELL IS EBEYE

By Kim Echlin

The day I met Hope, she was burying her third child. We were gathered in a two-room plywood shack that was home to twenty-four people. They slept in shifts. The child, Matthew, was laid out on a white cloth on the floor, fragrant with flowers. In the coral yard outside, Hope's brothers were getting drunk.

Matthew was just past his first birthday - naming day - when he developed diarrhea. Hope was out playing bingo. In less than thirty-six hours he was dead of dehydration.

Four men carried the child's coffin to the graveyard on ocean-side. Sun-bleached gravestones, one tight against the next, cut white silhouettes against the grey shacks and Pacific sky. Small children crowded curiously over the box, fanning flies from the tiny still face with scraps of white cloth. Matthew's grandmother, a bent old woman missing her right big toe, leaned against a headstone. Her granddaughter brought her a pair of plastic thongs to wear for the ceremony. Women drifted into the coral graveyard.

The men leaned on a fence outside the death circle. One of them wore a green baseball hat that said: Where the hell is Ebeye. A pastor stepped forward. In seven days time they would gather again when the cat rose out of the ocean to take the child into the sea.

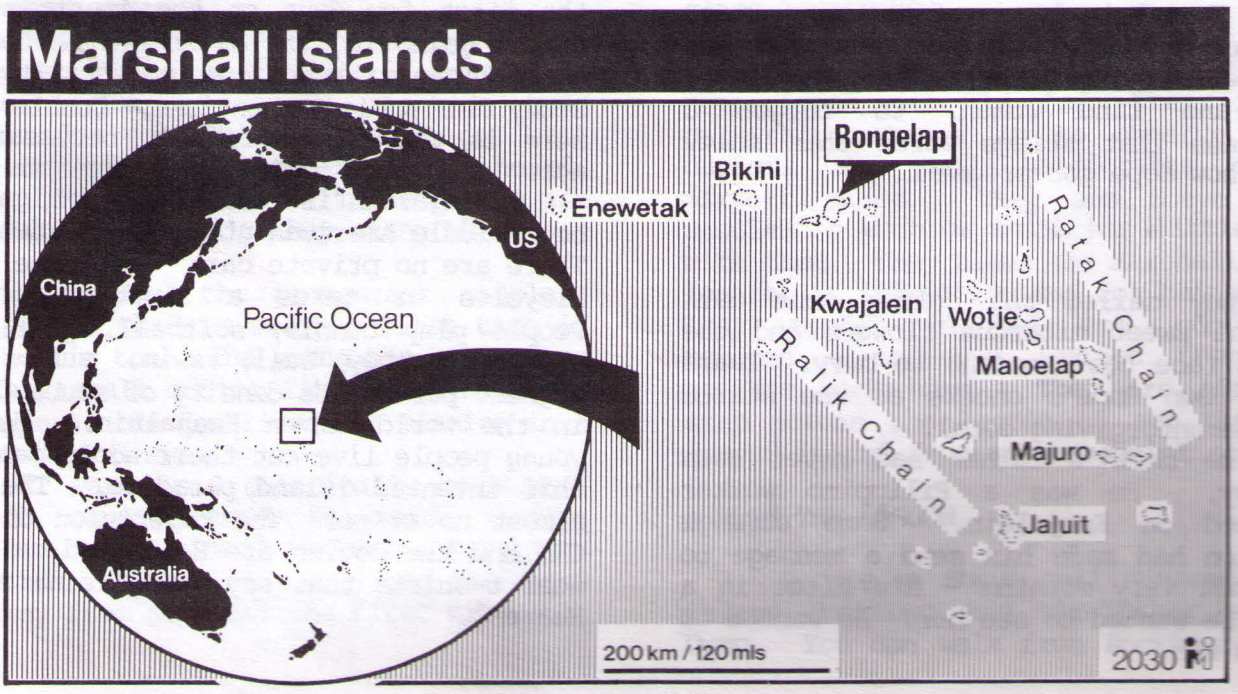
The pastor prayed.

* * * * * *

Ebeye is on the Kwajalein lagoon in the Marshall Islands between Hawaii and Japan. Military people call the lagoon the "catcher's mitt of the Pacific". It bristles with the most sophisticated radar tracking equipment in the world. The tracking system is called KREM: Kiernan Re-entry Measurement Site and is located on the island of Roi Namur at the north end of the atoll. KREM tracks MX missiles launched from Vandenburg, California.

In earlier travels, I had sailed in the Marshalls and heard the traditional stories of the outer islands. I heard too about testing the first hydrogen bombs at Bikini. Back at home again, I began to read about Kwajalein and Ebeye. I read that the people were living a kind of living death on this lagoon. They called Ebeye the "Calcutta of the Pacific". I didn't believe it. So I went to see.

When you arrive on Kwajalein they line you up against a wall and a military



man barks out the rules of the island. Drooling dogs sniff your bags. You try to find your balance in the exotic, disorienting heat of the equator. Even your toes are hot. On Kwajalein, a small group of American military personnel supervises 3,000 civilian workers - top technicians, scientists and maintenance staff and their families. The base has been developed by the United States since World War II to fulfill a dream best expressed by Senator Barry Goldwater: "We want to be able to drop a nuke into the men's room at the Kremlin." The week before I arrived, one of the missiles from California hit Kwajalein's own electrical generator. The official army statement said: "The missile was right on target."

Across the lagoon, twenty minutes away, is Ebeye - 78 acres in size, home to 10,000 people. Some people have been moved to Ebeye from other islands around the lagoon for security purposes. Many have moved there from the outer islands to try to get work. Here the days are as long as the nights. Ebeye is one of the few places in the world you can see the Southern Cross and the Big Dipper in the sky at the same time. At noon children nap in any narrow band of shade, under any scrap of cardboard or corrugated metal. There are virtually no trees. There is no space. Yet people continue to come and the birth rate is 1.5 per day. About 9% of Ebeye's population gets on the barge each day to commute over to the base at Kwajalein where they work as labourers and maids.

There are Americans who have lived on the Kwajalein lagoon for twenty years and never set foot on Ebeye. Those who go to Ebeye - mostly young men - go there to drink and find women, to forget a loneliness that stings worse than salt. That's how Hope got pregnant.

* * * * * *

They nailed the coffin shut dark over the sweet hibiscus flowers and the child's face too innocent to bury. Tears rolled down Hope's cheeks as she stared into the unforgiving coral.

The child's father had never seen the boy. He was a Filippino worker stationed on Kwajalein. Some strange intuition had made him send a message to Hope that very morning - his first in a year. He wanted to see her. He wanted to see his son.

photo by Phil Esmonde

Graveyard on Ebeye

After the funeral Hope walked down to the barge. "What am I going to say to him? I'll say I buried the child this morning...What if he blames me?...but one thing sure, I won't get pregnant again this time..."

The dissonance of mourning twisted her smile, "But if I do, well that happens, that's life too mum."

We stood together looking across the lagoon to Kwajalein. The flat coral skyline was broken by white satellite dishes and sleek high-tech towers. They cut the endless Pacific blues of sea and sky with the same salt-white gleam as the white gravestones on the other side of Ebeye.

ALMOST HEAVEN: KWAJALEIN

When I arrived on the lagoon I spent the first few days on the American base before going to stay on Ebeye. A tour of an American military testing facility is a study in public relations. Double talk here is the lingua franca, necessary or not.

Kwajalein is a community designed to be a middle American utopia. Walden III. There are no private cars - everyone rides bicycles or takes a shuttle service. People play tennis, softball, golf. On weekends, they sail, swim, sun. The highest per capita density of scuba divers in the world is on Kwajalein. Healthy young people live out their adolescence in this invented island paradise. There is almost no crime. The television diet is CNN and the movies are Hollywood. People wear t-shirts that say "Kwajalein: Almost Heaven".

But utopias are built on dreams of conformity. They hide whatever threatens their perfection.

A few years ago Kwajalein was suffering morale problems. Ebeye workers were striking. Greenpeace got on the island and strung up anti-nuclear signs. A group of Marshallese landowners staged "sail-ins" to draw attention to their concerns over land payments and living conditions on Ebeye. Maids were forbidden on the island. A new colonel was brought in to straighten things out.

Everyone says that life is better under Colonel Chapman. Marshallese domestics are back on the base. The curfew for Marshallese on Kwajalein has been eased and Marshallese are allowed once again into the snack bar. One hundred Marshallese a day can visit Kwajalein. They line up for passes. Friday is the best day to go because that's lawn sale day. Marshallese aren't allowed into the department store but they can go to lawn sales.

During my visit, I was assigned a public relations officer and permitted access to the base. I sat in the Yokwe Club. I sat in the outdoor bachelor's club. I listened. The two biggest problems: isolation, boredom. I met a young man from Texas who had arrived eighteen months ago. He was so lonely you could feel it in his breath.

"It's good to talk to someone new. Out here there's hardly any women and after you talk to the guys a while you know just about what they're gonna say. What do I do? Watch videos, work out in the weight room.

"No, I've never been to Ebeye. It gets pretty wild over there I heard. A lot of drinking, people fighting over women. One guy who lives there got beat up pretty good with a two-by-four I heard. Guess I don't need that. Those people are just lazy. Why don't they clean the place up."

I visited the protestant chaplain and learned that it was his first time in the Pacific too. The young man ushered me into his small office littered with books and papers. He described his mission in a mid-western drawl.

"I was hired principally because I can do counselling," he said. "The problems I deal with...marriage, isolation...a lot of the young men here are away from home for the first time.

"As far as the Marshallese go, well, we want to share with them, we have a policy of cultural exchange." He lingered over the new words issued direct from Colonel Chapman.

"What can the Marshallese share?"

There was a long pause in the room. The clock ticked. He blushed in the cold blast of air-conditioning.

"Well...they can share their singing."

"When you go to Ebeye do you participate in their services?"

"I don't go to Ebeye. I'm hired by Global...that's the contractor that takes care of all the day to day concerns of the island...our restaurants, supplies, the department store, recreation, the church. My responsibility is to the people here...that's what I was hired for."

The young man shifted in his seat. Man of god. Hired by Global.

The chaplain's attitude was consistent with each culture's different notion of story-telling - oral and written. The Americans feel there is no reason to be curious about the Marshallese people or language or history because the Marshallese themselves have never recorded their history. It is the classic tale of technological cultures consuming non-technological cultures. Americans would say casually, "They're losing their culture" as if it were a small coin dropped into the ocean. They always perceived the Marshallese as most satisfactory when they appeared to share the aspirations and manners of middle-class Americans.

Most Americans on Kwajalein are afraid to visit Ebeye. They make frequent comparisons with Tijuana. Their idea of cultural exchange is to observe quaint customs and sell handicrafts in the airport store. They see Ebeye as an unsolvable problem which has little to do with them. They blame the Marshallese for lacking in initiative and for being dirty. They prefer cliched and comfortable notions of poverty learned from their ghettos back home. They are afraid to step across the lagoon to see their own leased island from another point of view.

ACROSS THE LAGOON

People on Ebeye call one end of the island Rocktown and the other end The Dump. You can walk from Rocktown to The

Dump in about fifteen minutes. Tucked into the shadows of shanty housing are pinball machines. Through doorways blue kung-fu videos flicker on tv screens. Budweiser consumption is high, but there is no social drinking. You drink to get drunk. You drink to forget.

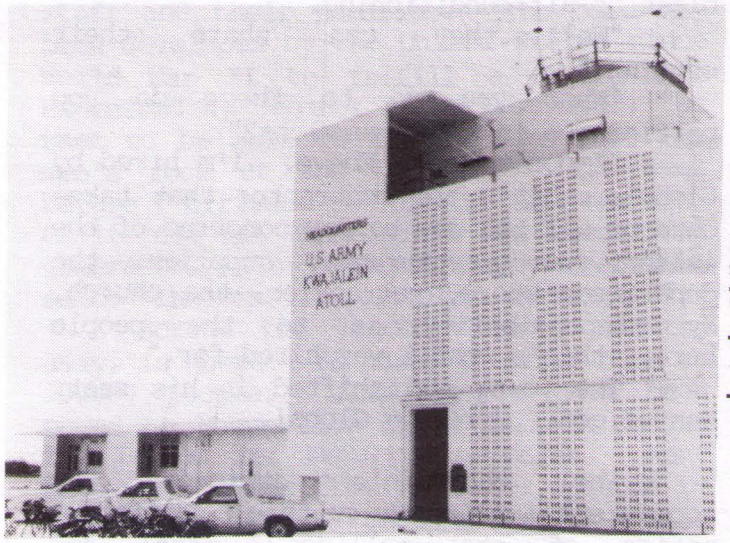


photo by Phil Esmonde

Kwajalein Air Terminal

Young people hang around the corners of the rows of houses, all day, all night. Over fifty percent of the population is under fifteen years old and there is no public highschool. Teen suicide is the highest in the world. Boys and young men join gangs: The Octopus, The Sharks, The Leskan (Spear-mouths), and The OKK. OKK stands for Olim (no money), Konta (begging), Kicko (hustling girls).

Dribo Dribo is the Ebeye probation officer. He studied social work at Washington State. Giant cockroaches skitter across the concrete walls and floor of his office in the police station. He wants to talk. Softly. Slowly.

"What are the charges? Assault and battery. Burglary. Vandalism. They want money to go to the restaurant. They have no way to get money.

"The girls have groups too - Jinlij (t-shirts) and Jeite (runaways). One of my cases was a fourteen year old girl who ran away and started living with a boy. Her grandmother called me to find the girl but she didn't want to go back. She told me her grandfather raped her. In your country I would tell authorities and we'd charge the old man, but I couldn't do it here. I talked to her parents. I got them to take her back. I told the old man to find some way to tell his wife the girl wasn't coming back. I couldn't break the old lady's heart."

Everyone knows everyone on a small island. People are related to each other. Dribo Dribo's training in Washington doesn't work here. He says, "I have to work between the law and the traditional way."

Dribo Dribo shares with every other Marshallese a political matrix which is bound to the centuries old law of the irooj - the traditional leader. The irooj divides up the goods and responsibilities in the community. His word is law. But the new written law of the Marshalls, the 1986 constitution formed under a Compact of Free Association with the United States, contradicts tradition. The new written law was created by American lawyers. It is based on the American traditions of the nuclear family, individual liberties, competition and free enterprise.

To spend time on Ebeye is to acquire a fluency in contradiction - the body uncomfortably trying to scratch its own bones. Dribo Dribo, raised in Marshall custom, trained in American ways. looks uncomfortably over his shoulder at the long shadow of the irooj.

photo by Phil Esmonde

Ebeye

THE KABUAS

In the late nineteenth century a Marshallese irooj called Kabua exchanged the right to trade copra (dried coconut) for gold, a German ship and a German captain's uniform. Copra is the principle commodity traded in the Marshalls - first with the Germans and Japanese, now with the Americans.

The Kabua family is the oldest and most powerful family in the Marshall Islands They are traditional leaders - the irooj lap-lap. Today Amata Kabua is President of the first Republic of the Marshall Islands and his son, Imada Kabua is the irooj of Ebeye. The family owns a lot of land and traditionally has produced great navigators. More recently its power has come from negotiating with the American government over compensation payments for nuclear testing and land lease and rental moneys. The family is extremely wealthy. They often visit Hawaii. They are known for their lavish evenings in Waikiki hotels. Mike Kabua is the youngest son. He has built a tiny, private world on Ebeye. It's a club. It's called Mike's.

Inside Mike's, the dirty beaches, the crowded shacks pressing up against the scarred skyline disappear like bad memories. It could be any club in the world. The walls open to an enclosed patio. In a back room men gamble at a Chinese game called `pokai'. Thousands of American dollars pass across the table. Inside Mike's place the colliding fantasies of Ebeye and America appear in fixed relief.

Mike Kabua is forty-two. During the day he wears dark glasses, dark green army fatigues and gold rings.

We sit out on the patio. "I built this whole place from an idea in my head. There were no written plans. Next year this trellis will have more plants. I leave this side open, I like to be able to see the sky."

Mike is called away to oversee new carpeting for the gambling room. he has told me before how much he likes to see the sky. The old Marshallese night sky holds the secrets of navigation. Stars and wave patterns showed the ancient ancient navigators where they were and where they were going. When Mike returns he calls for a bottle of white wine - rare on Ebeye. He has a Filippino businesswoman named Gigi with him and we drink. No one can refuse the hospitality of an irooj. He is flattered when Gigi tells him he 'has class.' Our talk turns to travel - an empty litany of place names.

"I've been everywhere in Europe, I was all over the United States - often in Washington. I was in Vancouver and Niagara Falls. In Buffalo they had a celebration for me and they gave me a key to the city. I asked them if it would open all the banks of America."

We laugh. We talk about Mike's native island of Ebon, the southern atoll where he grew up. I told him a myth I heard there of the lovely, proud woman who bathes each evening on the reef - she makes the sunset streak orange and red, the most beautiful sunsets in the Marshalls. Mike answers,

"I was raised on Ebon by my grandparents and I learned to fish there. I heard the old stories...but I feel them pulling away..." He pulled his two hands invisibly against each other in the air, "Culture is changing but I see this change with sadness..."

Michael Kabua doesn't know how to navigate and he doesn't fish much anymore. His dream, when the bar is finished, is to start a market to sell fish and local foods to Kwajalein. Give the people a way to make money. Mike Kabua was sent to business school in Orange county before he came back to settle on Ebeye. When I asked him who he sees in Honolulu, he answered with a sly grin, "Imelda Marcos."

The traditional leadership of the Marshalls has been particularly unprepared for the world to move in. From their first encounters with the Germans they quickly used their power to acquire the foreign goods which in their culture signalled social status and prestige. The German captain's uniform and the American bar take on a multiple significance. Nothing about Ebeye seems fixed. The buildings themselves seem ready to blow away into the sky. And as the traditional leadership tries to fix things, divert local money, hold onto their land - new problems are created. Take, for example, the legendary stainless steel trailer at The Dump.

The trailer used to belong to a respected irooj called Lejallin. Lejallin died some years ago but traditional custom dictates that no one may enter the home of a dead irooj. In the days of woven huts, the house blew down in a year or two and then the land could be used once again. But a stainless steel trailer doesn't blow down. It resists even the merciless salt of the Pacific and Lejallin's trailer stands untouched. Lots of stories have grown up around the trailer. Stories repeated because they express the hidden fears and desires of the people. It is said that money is hidden in the trailer. Once two young boys went inside to get the

money. One boy became sick and died and the other was so fearful he hung himself. Lejallin's trailer is still there, taking up precious land, and I was shooed away when I went to look.

photo by Phil Esmonde

"Ocean-side" House on Ebeye

POLITICIANS ARE GOOD AND BAD LIARS

The elected mayor of Ebeye is a young radical called Alvin Jacklick. I visited him in a spacious, air-conditioned office that also houses the Kwajalein Atoll Development Association (KADA). This group has fought for control of land rental payments made to the Marshallese government each year by the United States. Alvin Jacklick wears a t-shirt and leans back in his leather chair. A wide desk separates us and behind him are pictures of his family and a model outrigger canoe. It is an office that foreigners understand. Jacklick was elected in 1983 after four years of voluntary work in the Kwajalein administration office. Alvin Jacklick understands the difference between an oral and a written tradition. His language has the foretold quality of someone who believes he knows the end.

"I grew up on the ocean. My father was a navigator, and an engineer trained by the Japanese. I sailed all over the atoll and to other atolls with him - to Likiep, to Majuro.

"In 1970, I wanted to go to school at the University of Washington in Seattle. They stopped me in Honolulu because the Marshallese government hadn't sent my papers. But I got through anyway.

"What made me different? I wasn't dependent on my parents. I wanted to replace the magistrate on Kwajalein. A few days before I left I went to him and said, "Murph, I'm going to school in Seattle for four years. When I come back I'm going to replace you.":

"Murph said, "I never heard a Marshallese guy talk like that." Then he pulled out his wallet and gave me everything that was in it - three hundred dollars - and he said, "I want to thank you for saying that to me."

"In our traditional way, the child is dependent on the grandparents and everyone is dependent on the irooj. But what do I do if I'm a young man on Ebeye with two or three children. Should I have to go to my grandfather and ask for ten dollars to feed my family? In the extended family everyone is dependent on the head of the household."

photo by Phil Esmonde

Ebeye Street

The covey of new young leadership on Ebeye is staking out its power with an inexperienced, nervous intelligence. They talk openly of the failure of the irooj system. They eat lunch with American lawyers, drink at Mike's place with visiting officials. Alvin Jacklick calls himself a politician, and when I ask whether the radical changes he proposes will work he winks ironically, "Politicians are good liars and bad liars...The time will come for the Marshallese people to decide between the traditional power of the irooj and the freedom of democracy. A lot of young people now reject the traditional leaders."

"Will it work?"

"The question remains to be answered."

Under Alvin Jacklick the island has already got a sanitation system, running water and a desalination plant. Jacklick intends to take over public safety and the miserably understaffed departments of education and health before the end of the year.

The nervousness of the new leadership comes from trying to sail a new kind of vessel. As I made ready to leave, Jacklick repeated a Marshallese proverb.

"Jela turin jela...this means knowing beside the real knowing, to pretend to understand what you really don't. It's a dangerous quality in leadership."

Alvin Jacklick has contemplated power. In the United States. In the Marshall Islands. Alvin Jacklick grew up on the ocean. He knows how shifting winds and hidden currents change the course of a ship. The navigator learns about the waves and the stars from the old men before he sails alone. But when he sails alone, it is he who must bring the ship safely back home.

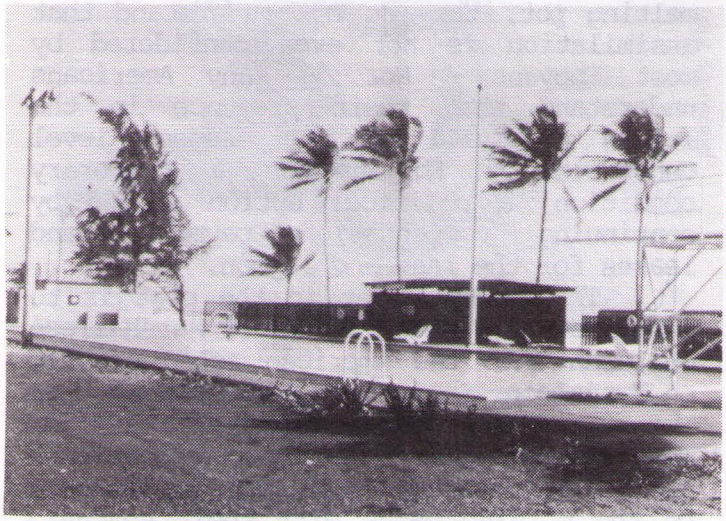


photo by Phil Esmonde

Swimming Pool on Kwajalein

POOREST OF EBEYE

Outsiders often see Ebeye as a nightmare romance of the tropics, a Heart of Darkness, a place in which any outrage can be tolerated and a place no one would choose to live. But to believe this is to miss Ebeye.

Plenty of people have chosen Ebeye as home. There is Ben Barry, a black American from Texas. He chose Ebeye twenty years ago. He escaped marriage and kids and a living death in a factory in southern Texas. He was hooked on heroin in the Korean war. He kicked it and became a sailor. He worked a stint on the Kwajalein base then moved to Ebeye. Today he deals pokai in the back of Mike's place. The Kabuas take care of him. His story is still punctuated with trying to comprehend the incomprehensible - the racism he suffered back home. "How come I stay here on Ebeye?" says Ben, "I been a lot of places and this is the first place on earth ever took me just the way I am."

There is Father Hacker. Father Hacker is a Jesuit from Buffalo, New York. He was a World War II prisoner in a Japanese camp. After that he came to the Marshalls. He's built two churches and two different congregations - one on Majuro, one on Ebeye. He preaches in Marshallese each Sunday to a crowded church. He worked closely with the Marshallese Bible translation project. He has a boys' marching band and he runs a small school. When I asked him if he thought the Ebeye children were growing up in two worlds he spluttered impatiently, "Of course they don't live in two worlds, they make it one world."

There is Bobby, the Filippino who will sell you anything. Bobby is one of those outsiders who imagines Ebeye as a kind of colonial opportunity to be tapped. Bobby commutes to his job on Kwajalein each day but on Ebeye he also runs a jeepnee, a garishly painted Filippino bus. He was importing power boats from Denver while I was there and opening a restaurant and toying with the idea of a water taxi service to and from Kwajalein. Bobby was on the make. Ebeye was the place he chose to make it.

Ebeye has its liminal groups too. A few Vietnam vets who scratch out a living and hang around bars with the mile long stare. Marshallese from the outer islands who come and live off their relatives and ride around and around in taxis. The people who live in The Shelter.

The Shelter is a large echoing concrete building that used to be a recreation area for the public school. There was a fire in 1982 that swept over The Dump end of the island and threatened to raze the whole place. People ran out of their shacks and watched as the flames leapt from one house to another in seconds. Only the ocean itself could stop the flames. Small buckets flew from hand to hand. A few men started ploughing down the tiny rooms of birth and life and death

with construction tractors. In this way they stopped the fire.

Half The Dump got destroyed in that fire. Some people never rebuilt. Maybe the sight of the fire burned away their desire. They huddled in corners and stayed in The Shelter. They marked out space with large mats. They ran a long cord in through the door and plugged n their televisions. They played bingo. Children began again to be born. Infant mortality here is the highest on Ebeye. The kids are malnourished. They don't go to school. On Ebeye, they are the poorest of the poor.

photo by Phil Esmonde

Ebeye Storefront

SCHOOL DAYS

There is one small private high school on Ebeye - run by the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Facilities, teachers, space are all inadequate.

The principal's wife told me this story. One day a boy came to her and asked to be admitted. They were overcrowded and she couldn't allow him in. Each year they turn away students. When the boy went home his father beat him. That night the boy hung himself.

TELL ME A STORY

There is a precise point at which the Americans on Kwajalein and the Marshallese on Ebeye fail to connect. It is in their sense of story-telling. For Americans, raised on television serials and Aristotle, each story must have a beginning, middle and end. But for the Marshallese, raised on oral narrative, stories are constantly shifting and adapting, told, retold, modified, only the most sacred details remain fixed. The law of the ocean is eternal and moving. If the Marshallese people don't believe that the effects of nuclear testing will never end, it is because their sense of history has taught them to believe that time has no terminal point. Western myth tells of holocausts and revelations that play out the end. But Marshallese myth depicts history as a continuum of human stories, of gods and tides and wave patterns forever interconnected. And the ongoing, unanticipated effects of western nuclear weapons on Marshallese bodies and culture substantiate their view of history. There is no end.

Marshallese people talk, incomprehensibly to the Americans, of a time when the Americans will leave their lagoon. The Germans have come and gone. The Japanese have come and gone. Why not the Americans?

The Americans, on the other hand, know that a conclusion must be reached - the denouement played out. Fixed as Americans are on the narrative of the melting pot, they do not understand that assimilation is not even considered by most Ebeyans. Nor do many Americans understand that their presence in the lagoon is still at the deepest level construed by Ebeyans as a temporary condition, a political option shaped by continuing compensation payments and leases for the land and lagoon.

The latest twist in the plot is to assimilate a limited number of Marshallese children into the American school system on Kwajalein.

In 1987, five Marshallese children were chosen to use the educational facilities of Kwajalein. They leave Ebeye on the morning barge with their teacher, Atota, and spend half a day in the kindergarten and half a day in the nursery school. Next year they will go on to first grade and a new group of five will enter the system. If the program continues there will be seventy-five Ebeye children in the American school system on Kwajalein by the time the first group reaches twelfth grade. But when they go home to Ebeye each night, they return to an island with no public high school, where most of the population has nothing to do but wait.

Kathy is the nursery school teacher on Kwajalein. She is an enthusiastic observer of the children's progress.

"It's a great opportunity for them. Of course there are cultural differences at first. You saw this morning with our reading books. They had trouble identifying the pictures of the elevator, of the banjo. But they'll adapt.

"What improvements would I like to see? Well, there is one thing. I'd like to forbid them absolutely to speak Marshallese on the island. When they have a problem they always go to Atota, the teacher's aide, and speak Marshallese. We don't know what's going on, they don't learn how to cope."

The American melting pot. Get them young. Forget their language. Like most people on Kwajalein, Kathy has never taken the free twenty-minute barge to the island across the lagoon. She has never been to Ebeye.

photo by Phil Esmonde

Picking out lice: Ebeye

UGLY RIBALLE - GO BACK TO KWAJALEIN

Riballe means `clothes-wearer' and is used for whites. It survives from early mission days. I met one young Marshallese man who was mistaken for a riballe. His name was Qew.

Qew was visiting the island as a translator for a documentary film maker. He had been away studying in California for five years. He dressed and talked like a Californian. Lots of people didn't recognize him as Marshallese when he was with Americans. One day we walked by a group of shouting children and he laughed.

"Know what they just said to me - they said, `Ugly riballe, go back to Kwajalein!"

Qew was worried about what to do when he finished school. As we sat eating sashimi in his uncle's restaurant, he paused and looked around the room - six small tables and Pacific pop music rattling out of the speakers held by a nail to the wall. "All I know is I'd like to come back but I don't know what I could do here now. My friends all drink too much. Americans are the stupidest and the smartest. They've brought the best and the worst. Now, what can we do with it?"

* * * * * *

The most peaceful time of day on Ebeye is twilight. Small children hush their crying. The long struggle of each day to get to evening is finally over. The fears of the night have not yet set in.

I liked to go down to the wharf at twilight. Men and boys fished each night. They shared bait and lines and gazed out on the waters. They watched the evening barge come in. Workers came home carrying coolers of ice. Small boys ran around the wharf and little girls tipped their chins forward and twirled their braids in a circle around their heads. Handstands were the latest fad among the children. They clustered in small groups flipping upside down.

The west has created a myth of the idyllic Pacific paradise. The west loves Robinson Crusoe. It buys Gauguin's paintings of thick women with flowers in their hair. It produces South Pacific for Broadway and takes the middle classes to Pacific Club Meds. It is ironic that the west has never met the people of the Pacific.

When I left Ebeye, Qew saw me off at the barge. I stood on deck looking back at the island until it disappeared into the dusk of the blue lagoon. The island where I'd heard a thousand stories jumbled together like shanty housing. The island where I'd seen a thousand faces waiting. The barge bumped against the dock and I felt the dull thud of Kwajalein. I felt the dull thud of turning away and already I was half-way home.

[Kim Echlin spent several weeks on Ebeye and Kwajalein in July 1987. She is a journalist with CBC's "The Journal".]

NAURU SEEKS $A216 FOR LAND REHABILITATION

In the Parliament of Nauru this week, Hammer DeRoburt tabled a ten-volume report from the commission of inquiry into rehabilitation of the worked-out phosphate lands on Nauru. He had returned to the island only at the weekend after protracted treatment in Melbourne for cancer.

The principal finding of the report is that Australia, Britain and New Zealand, the nations responsible for mining before independence, should each pay $A72 million in compensation to cover the cost of rehabilitation.

Four-fifths of Nauru's 22 square kilometres area has been rendered useless for habitation, farming or any other purpose by 70 years of intensive phosphate mining and the Government established the commission of inquiry in the hope of generating pressure on the Australian, British and New Zealand governments to finance the rehabilitation.

After the tabling of the report, an Australian Foreign Affairs Department spokesman said that the Australian Government would study it, but he repeated the Government's previous statements that it believed the pre-independence settlement with Nauru had been just. In that deal, Nauru took over the phosphate mining industry and was allowed to acquire the assets of the former colonial miners for $21 million.

However, the commission of inquiry said that the assets rightfully belonged to the Nauruans, anyway. It found that the three mining nations had committed "a violation of obligations" by failing to rehabilitate the mined-out land and had caused "wrongful loss" to Nauru by rendering the land useless.

It made other allegations of "abuse of rights, profiteering and exploitation". It said the contention by the mining nations that Nauru should pay for its rehabilitation from phosphate sales was "untenable in morality or law".

The three governments took no part in the commission of inquiry proceedings, but a statement issued by Nauru's office in Melbourne said that the report was "destined to bring some international embarrassment to the governments of Australia, Britain and New Zealand". It described the report as leveling "damning criticisms at the three mining nations".

The three-member commission of inquiry began public hearing in February 1987 and ended them in January 1988 after sitting in Nauru, Melbourne and Wellington.

In its criticism of the mining nations, the commission's report said:

"Entrusted by the world community with this sacred trust of civilisation, the three powers concerned failed to act in accordance with that trust and acted for their own benefit, rather than for that of the people (of Nauru).

"This would be a grave proposition to advance in regard to three powers of the stature and status of the three partner governments. However, the documentary material which we cite in great detail in support of our conclusion bears this out strongly and, in our view, beyond reasonable doubt."

The report said that Australia, as the administering authority of Nauru for 20 years, was aware that an alternative land area would have to be provided for the Nauruans if rehabilitation did not take place. Yet it continued to pursue a policy, which progressively, and at an accelerated pace, rendered the island unfit for habitation.

DeRoburt told Parliament that the commission of inquiry viewed failure to rehabilitate Nauru as having violated the principles of international law; the Trust Agreement (covering the mining operations); the United Nations Charter; the principles of conscience, equity and morality; and the general principles of law recognised by civilised nations, as referred to in Article 38 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice.

He described as "stunning" a finding by the commission that land rehabilitation on Nauru was feasible and cost effective. "We are no longer looking at the arrival of giant ships disgorging vast amount of soil culled from where ever in the world to fill the holes," he said, "but rather at a carefully designed program extending over 20 years."

The program would involve natural soil and plant regeneration, secondary resource gathering and recontouring, at a total cost of $215.9 million.

[From **PACIFIC REPORT**, Issue Number 20, December 22, 1988]

THE BATTLE FOR POWER IN PORT VILA

Vanuatu's constitutional crisis has erupted again with the `dissolution' of Parliament and the arrest of rebel `prime minister' Barak Sope. DAVID ROBIE backgrounds the issues.

The President of Vanuatu, Ati George Sokomanu, has finally exposed his political ambitions in his attempt to become the troubled South Pacific nation's power broker by naming rebel politician Barak Sope as caretaker "prime minister".

Within hours of Sope and his interim administration being sworn in, paramilitary police arrested him, and the Prime Minister, Father Walter Lini, appeared still firmly in control. The elected Lini government and constitutional experts in Port Vila claim that the president acted illegally in trying to dissolve Parliament last Friday.

Sokomanu, a former deputy prime minister in the Lini government and an uncle of Sope, has been accused of betraying the impartiality of his office as ceremonial head of state ever since the year long power struggle between Lini and Sope erupted into the open.

In a surprise speech at the opening of Parliament following the controversial by-elections for 18 seats on December 12, Sokomanu tried to dissolve the chamber and call a fresh general election in February.

He warned that because of the boycott of the by-elections by the opposition Union of Moderate Parties and Sope's Melanesian Progressive Pati a one-party state would emerge if events continued along the same path.

"This is not, in my opinion, democracy at all and this must be obvious to any reasonable person looking at events as they are unfolding," he said. "We have a constitution which I believe is being flouted in every respect and the actions of everybody involved in the politically turbulent past six months or so, irrespective of the technicalities involved, are a sad legacy to our intentions when we founded our republic."

Noble though his words sounded, critics cited the speed with which he appointed his protege, Barak Sope, "prime minister" as evidence of political bias.

Sope was blamed by the Lini Cabinet for being the instigator of anti-government rioting last May which caused the death of one man and damage in the capital of $2 million. He was sacked from Cabinet and ousted by the ruling Vanuaaku Pati.

A "hit list" has been circulated by close supporters of Sope, which names leading members of the Lini Cabinet and senior civil servants as revenge targets. Signed "Mr. Black Dog", the list warned that a man had already been martyred for land rights and that if anybody else died "one of you will either die or will disappear without trace".

Among people named on the list are Lands Minister William Mahit, Finance Minister Sela Molisa, Lini's private secretary Joe Natuman and the second secretary in the Prime Minister's Office, Grace Molisa.

Earlier this month the Prime Minister rejected an appeal from President Sokomanu to scrap the by-elections and hold a fresh general election. Lini prevented the plea being broadcast on state-run Radio Vanuatu and accused the head of state of meddling in political affairs.

The Prime Minister went further. He claimed Sokomanu was trying to use his office to support Sope's bid for power and called for his resignation.

BARAK SOPE
Part of the 'Gang of Five'

Supporters of Sope accuse Lini of trying to create a dictatorship or a one-party state. However, Lini and his supporters allege Sope is trying to subvert Vanuatu's democratic process through coercion, opportunism and corruption.

Sope, once one of the most powerful ideologues of the Vanuaaku Pati and its secretary-general for 14 years, has been an ardent admirer of Fiji military strongman Major-General Sitiveni Rabuka. He has been openly impressed with the way Rabuka seized power through a coup d'etat, and speculation has been rife for some months that he would attempt to do the same in Vanuatu with support from the President.

On a visit to Suva in October, Sope joined General Rabuka in a bitter attack on Australian - and by implication, New Zealand - diplomacy in the Pacific. He also publicly admitted that he found Rabuka to be a "very interesting person".

Following a series of constitutional law challenges to the Lini administration, Sope's new Zealand-born lawyer Peter Coombe was earlier this month ordered to leave the country. His two week deadline expired last Wednesday. The Prime Minister refused to reconsider the deportation order and Coombe was forced to leave last Sunday.

Lini did not reveal the reason for the expulsion. But government sources have claimed Coombe - along with an American and a West Papuan, who have also been declared persona non grata - have been interfering in the internal politics of Vanuatu.

Coombe denies the allegation: "It isn't true. My interest is purely in offering legal advice and service."

As a lawyer he had represented about 40 people of the 120 people arrested during the post-riot purge in Port Vila - including two brothers of Barak Sope. The brothers were among five men who were last month jailed with sentences ranging from 11 to 14 months; three others were given suspended sentences. The eight faced charges of rioting and malicious damage.

Coombe failed to win three constitutional challenges in July on behalf of Sope and his renegade MPs, the so-called "Gang of Five", and 18 opposition Union of Moderate Parties members who had been expelled from Parliament. But he later won a Court of Appeal judgement.

WALTER LINI
Prime Minister of Vanuatu

Shortly after Sope and his four Melanesian Progressive Pati MPs - William Edgell, Charles Godden, Anatole Lingtamat and Jimmy Simon - were reinstated declaring they had no confidence in the Speaker , Onneyn Tahi.

Sope claimed in a statement that Mr Tahi had "disgraced" the office of Speaker. Mr Tahi had repeatedly warned the five that they would have problems retaining their parliamentary seats for the budget session because they had missed three consecutive sitting days late in July.

The resignations coincided with the close of nominations for last week's by-elections for the 18 vacant Union of Moderate Parties seats. The move meant Sope's Melanesian Progressives - which would have formed a token formal Opposition had they remained in the chamber - effectively joined Opposition Leader Maxime Carlot's boycott of the elections.

However, the Vanuaaku Pati was not the only contender. The Tan Union and Nagriamel - the Santo-based party which mounted an attempted secession at independence in 1980 - as well as a handful of independents also contested the by-elections.

Nine of the vacant seats were filled unopposed - six to the Vanuaaku Pati and three to the Tan Union.

The parliamentary line-up is now Vanuaaku Pati and its allies, 35 seats, Tan Union, five, and six vacant - the Santo seat and five Melanesian Progressive seats.

...continued

Ironically, among the six nominated new Vanuaaku Pati members is party vice-president Kalkot Matas-Kelekele, who has succeeded Sope in the Port Vila electorate - and like his former party colleague is an Ifira Islander, where Sope draws most of his support.

Sope won the battle of international press coverage in the wake of the May rioting, but his domestic image has continued to slide.

In last year's general election, he won his seat by just three votes. At the time, Sope challenged Lini for the prime ministership, attacking the leader's ill health after Lini had become partly paralysed following a stroke in Washington 10 months previously.

But he was easily defeated.

Sope then forced Lini to include him in the Cabinet by threatening to split the Vanuaaku Pati if he were left out. The growing rift finally erupted with a riot which followed a land rights demonstration.

Sope (at the time Minister for Tourism, Immigration and Transport) was blamed for instigating the riot and was dismissed from Cabinet. He was later stripped of his post of party secretary-general, and the "Gang of Five" was sacked from the party when it signed a no-confidence motion against the Lini Government.

In an interim report on the Vila Urban Land Corporation (VULCAN), the agency set up in 1981 to administer customary land leases to businesses in the capital, allegations of irregularity and financial mismanagement were upheld.

VULCAN - closely associated with Sope, who was a board member representing Ifira Island, one of three traditional land-owing villages - was closed by the Lands Ministry in an incident which led to the land rights protest.

Sope is reputedly the wealthiest ni-Vanuatu businessman. His opponents claim his political credibility has been seriously eroded during the six-month constitutional crisis, but his ability for a dramatic fightback cannot be underestimated.

Reprinted from *The Dominion*, December 20, 1988

Vanuatu at the United Nations

A statement made at the United Nations by Ambassador Robert F. Van Lierop, Permanent Representative of Vanuatu, November 8, 1988.

Frequently, the sheer unsurpassed and majestic beauty of the South Pacific conjures up images of tropical South Seas paradises where breathtaking sunsets and the good life are abundant, and there are few worries. In a sense these images are understandable. The South Pacific is physically beautiful and abundant. Life there, like life anywhere, is what people make of it. In the South Pacific most people are at peace with their neighbours, in harmony with the environment, and in step with some of mankind's highest ideals.

Paradoxically, however, the images of tropical paradises are, in another sense, very misleading. There are severe economic and social problems in the South Pacific just as there are in every other region of the world. The South Pacific's geographic remoteness from the rest of the world so celebrated by writers, artists, adventurers and tourists - is at the same time a severe constraint on economic development.

The small populations and great distances between islands that are to some a relaxing relief and quaint novelty, are to others obstacles to be overcome when planning economic development. The sun, the water, and the lush tropical breezes so treasured by everyone can, and on occasion do, raise havoc and create frightening and life threatening destructive forces. Cyclones, hurricanes, earthquakes and other natural disasters have taken their toll in the South Pacific just as they have in Africa; in Europe; in North, South and Central America and the Caribbean; and in other parts of Asia.

Generally speaking, the South Pacific is a paradise. However, it is also a part of this world, and more precisely a part of this modern world with its modern problems. As such, it is not a "perfect" paradise. No such place exists anywhere on this planet.

The South Pacific is not immune to natural disasters. It is not immune to environmental hazards. Nor is it immune

to the follies, the greed, and the selfish ambitions of some members of the human race.

People all over the world are basically the same. We have the same expectations, the same hopes, the same dreams, the same strengths, and the same weaknesses.

The Government of Vanuatu proud of its Melanesian heritage, proud of its South Pacific character, and proud of its hard won political independence now candidly faces a difficult dilemma. The great challenge confronting Vanuatu now, and, which we have accepted, is how do we better the lives of the people of Vanuatu without sacrificing a unique way of life?

How do we bring economic development without cultural alienation and social dismemberment? How do we raise the standard of living without lowering our values and beliefs in humanity? How do we raise our economic and moral expectations at the same time, and to the same levels.

We do not expect easy answers to these questions. Very wise and very capable heads have been grappling with these, and similar, questions for generations.

We consider ourselves fortunate, however, to now belong to the United Nations, the community of nations - figuratively the family of mankind. Now we have the opportunity to listen and learn from the experience of others - and where appropriate to contribute our own learning and experience to others. Now we have the opportunity to work with other nations, with specialized agencies of the United Nations, and with non-governmental development agencies.

The task is not going to be any easier. It is not going to be any quicker. It is not going to be any more certain. However, the generous and realistic help of friends and partners in development will make success more likely.

Less than two weeks ago, on the 28th of October, a Round Table Meeting for Vanuatu was held in Geneva, Switzerland. This was the first such meeting ever organised for Vanuatu and we applaud the efforts and energy of the United Nations Development Program.

From Vanuatu's point of view the meeting could not have taken place at a better time as the Second National Development Plan has just gotten underway. Therefore, an opportunity was afforded to present a development funding program based on the priorities of the planning process. The Second Development Plan, for the period 1987-91 focuses on manpower and infrastructural development, and, most importantly, a balanced pattern of regional and rural development.

Follow up on the decisions taken at the Round Table meeting is now essential, as well as aid coordination, the simplification of aid procedures, and an increased share of program financing. In addition it is our hope that future Round Table meetings can be held in the region. We can think of nothing which would make the South Pacific and its problems less remote and less abstract.

Vanuatu is a country with a shortage of skilled manpower, a recurrent cost problem, and a low level of domestic savings. External finance accounts for some 95% of total national development funding. Since independence, sources of aid have been diversified to a point where assistance is now received from more than twenty sources, including agencies of the United Nations.

The importance of the United Nations to countries such as Vanuatu, is dramatically illustrated, for example, by the fact that as a result of a very high birth rate of 3.2 percent the United Nations Population Fund has taken a growing interest. UNICEF now recognises Vanuatu as a priority country in view of the high rate of infant mortality and the low GDP. The United Nations Capital Development Fund has identified rural water supply and a number of other projects as high priorities.

The Asian Development Bank and the World Bank have also been important development partners for Vanuatu. However, with respect to development expenditure, successful resort to borrowing has now reached a point at which we prefer to restrict further external funding to grant or concessional loan sources.

However, perhaps the most touching assistance we have received is from those who are not themselves particularly wealthy in a material sense. We were very moved by those developing countries, which although facing their own difficulties, found it in their hearts to participate in our Round Table meeting. In this connection we applaud, in particular, the assistance being rendered in Vanuatu by China and Tunisia.

COUSTEAU REPORT RAISES MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT FRENCH TESTING

Jacques Cousteau finally released - in mid November - a report on his visit to Moruroa Atoll in June 1987. Critics in Polynesia state the report is based only on a partial investigation of the atoll.

According to press reports, the report based on a **limited** investigation states that Cousteau found no evidence "at present" of dangerous radioactivity in the area. However, the report found that the atoll has been deeply cracked by testing and warned that long term risks were difficult to evaluate. It suggested that existing drill holes for the nuclear tests could become "highways to the surface" for atomic waste.

Cousteau claimed that the atoll was in a state of "accelerating ageing". (Since Cousteau's visit and prior to release of his report, France announced it was moving some of its tests to nearby Fangataufa Atoll, and is thought to have exploded a nuclear device there in November).

Cousteau spent 5 days at Moruroa. The New Zealand Minister of Disarmament and Arms Control, Mr. Marshall, said the report only increased doubts about the safety of tests at Moruroa.

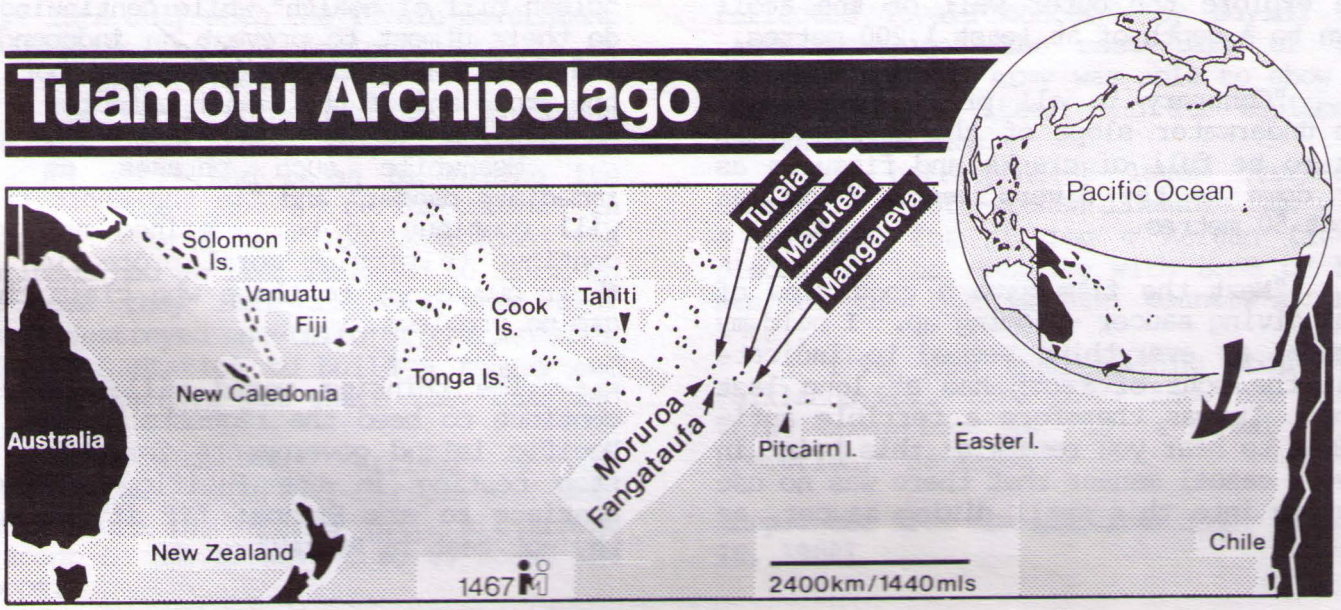
"A section of the report apparently states that the risks of radiological pollution in the short and medium term are negligible if accidents are excluded. But in the long term the report states that the risks are difficult to evaluate. I understand that Cousteau was not able to get all the information and data he needed from the French Atomic Energy Commission to reach a firm conclusion. The point is, accidents have happened and there can be no guarantees that they will not happen in the future."

GREENPEACE has called for a permanent independent commission to monitor the effects of nuclear testing in French Polynesia:

"In the opinion of GREENPEACE, objective scientific analysis of the newly published report by the Cousteau Foundation and the long term uncertainties it underlines, support the need to establish such a commission."

In Polynesia, Bengt Danielsson, author of the Penguin book **Poisoned Reign: French Nuclear Colonialism in the Pacific** has criticized the Cousteau expedition for being shallow, and points out that its conclusion that there is "no immediate danger" will be exploited by the French government, as has happened in the past with so-called "scientific investigations".

In a seven-page open letter to Cousteau, Danielsson critiques Cousteau's



television film of the journey, titled **Eau de Feu** (Water on Fire), which was shown in Polynesia and will likely be shown worldwide.

Danielsson points out that while the French continually state the tests are harmless they keep some hospital records secret and have constantly blocked all efforts by the democratically elected Territorial Assembly to set up its own commission of inquiry or to have a health survey completed by a team of independent, impartial doctors. Danielsson notes there was disappointment by many that Cousteau did not bring doctors with him.

Danielsson goes on to say:

"Your understandable attitude seemed to be that the world is full of doctors, able and ready to undertake a health survey the day the French authorities relent, if they ever do so, but that there was only one man - yourself - with the competence, prestige, equipment and right connections required to obtain the authorization to sail off right away to Moruroa to examine the submerged portion of the atoll.....you surprised and disappointed us by completing your promised "thorough survey" of Moruroa in five days.

"The main problem at Moruroa is the total lack of information about what has happened to the base of the atoll at a depth of between 800 and 1,200 metres, where more than 100 atomic bombs, reaching in yield up to 200 kilotonnes , have been exploded since 1976....What we ecologists expected of you on this occasion was that you explore the outer wall of the atoll down to a depth of at least 1,200 metres.

"Contrary to all prior assurances, the underwater slope of the atoll turned out to be full of cracks and fissures as far down as the divers went, which was about 50 metres.

"Next the film gave a good view of your diving saucer - coming up. I held my breath, as everything seemed to indicate that the hour of truth had at long last come. It was therefore a terrible anti-climax to hear you remark at this point in a very casual manner that there was no use getting into this small diving saucer, as it was unable to go down to a greater depth than 200 metres.

"This lame excuse does not hold water. For knowing well in advance that the zone where the bombs are detonated is situated between 800 and 1,200 metres below the surface, you should, of course, have brought a bigger and more deep-going saucer.

"What is most incomprehensible to me, however, is that you also failed to undertake another investigation, for which you did not need any additional diving apparatus - this is the fearful extent to which the lagoon fish, clams and crustacea have become poisonous on nearby inhabited islands. The reported number of cases of ciguatera fish poisoning in French Polynesia is between 700 and 800 per year, which is more than in all the remaining Pacific islands south of the equator taken together."

Danielsson is also critical of Cousteau's water sampling taken a full day after he had watched a nuclear test, rather than taken on the same day.

Danielsson did find one thing of interest though:

"Admittedly, the sequences showing how a water geyser rose 60 metres into the air during a test offered a little more interest, as it confirmed what we had all suspected for a long time: that venting regularly occurs."

It is certain that the French government will use Cousteau's report as a "clean bill of health" while continuing to do their utmost to prevent an **independent** and **full** survey to be undertaken both of the atoll and of the health effects.

Meanwhile such phrases as "no immediate danger" and "in the short term" will continue to be undefined and will continue to provide moral protection (in their own eyes) to those who claim there are no problems.

The thinking world will hopefully continue to heed the requests of **all** the Pacific island governments for France to stop testing in the Pacific, and will continue to ask France: "If it is safe, why not test in Paris?"

TANK WARFARE OR BULLDOZER DIPLOMACY?

By Phil Twyford

The far flung atolls of **Tuvalu** (population 8,500) were invaded by the United States in August for the first time since World War II.

The main island of this resource-poor nation, which last month celebrated a decade of independence, is so narrow in parts you could throw a frisbee from one coast to another in a good wind. For several days this year it resembled an army camp.

The U.S. landing ship **Arnold C. Clinger** sailed 3000 km from Hawaii with a cargo of 10 25-tonne trucks, two 90,000 litre water tankers, a mobile crane, three Dodge jeeps, three portable generators, a satellite communications truck and 27 crew. A Hercules airplane with 30 U.S. soldiers followed.

The purpose of the exercise? The installation of eight water tanks.

The story begins nearly two years ago when the newly posted U.S. ambassador in Suva stopped by Tuvalu to present his credentials. When he asked officials how Washington could help, the locals replied with a polite request for $15,000 to fund eight locally built 45,000-litre cement water tanks.

The atoll's water supply comes solely from collecting rainfall, made difficult in recent times by the dry air currents of El Nino.

Nothing more was heard of the tanks until late July when the Tuvalu Government was notified of the imminent arrival of the good ship Clinger.

The first thing ordinary Tuvaluans knew was when the Clinger beached on Funafuti atoll and began disgorging its cargo. The Star's correspondent in Funafuti reports many locals assumed the Americans had at last returned to clean up the mess they left in 1944 when U.S. troops destroyed one-third of the island's coconut plantation to build a runway and left a 4 hectare pit where they quarried coral.

Soon after the arrival of the Hercules, the Stars and Stripes was seen rising above the women's jail, a building adjacent to the airport used to house the troops.

A field hospital was erected and proved useful. Three soldiers assembling the water tanks were admitted for dehydration.

Eight 13,000-litre prefabricated steel tanks were put together before the aghast Tuvaluans. Steel tanks are rarely used in the Pacific; rust never gives them more than three years' life.

That the kitset tanks were bolted together using rubber washers presented yet another hitch. Tuvalu is home to the rubber-eating "knicker" beetle, so-called because it eats the elastic out of people's knickers.

The whole operation is estimated to have cost around $1.5 million. Seventh Day Adventists recently installed thirty 45,000-litre cement tanks in Tuvalu at a total cost of $34,000.

By this time, irate Tuvalu officials were voicing concern to the Americans, tensions spilled over into the handing over ceremony held in the country's main "maneaba," an open air meeting house.

Attending the gathering were six Tuvaluans including two senior ministers and their wives, a handful of tourists and aid workers, 30 military personnel, Suva-based U.S. diplomat Bob Benzinga, and chief of the army's international military affairs division in Hawaii, Colonel Sam Hemmings.

In an ad-libbed speech Benzinga reflected Tuvalu concerns by saying the tanks were not the most part of the exercise but the army was able to show it could transport itself and its equipment all that distance.

Our correspondent later overheard Hemmings, a soft-spoken likeable man with a penchant for playing a Korean flute, discussing the exercise with some of his men in the bar of the country's only hotel.

"I've just been reading about the Falklands War. You don't know how close this operation is to a real live operation," he said.

[Reprinted from the AUCKLAND STAR, October 16, 1988]

PACIFIC ISLANDS TOURISM

By Cynthia Z. Biddlecomb

There are approximately 35 nation-states and territories in the Pacific Islands region. Among them, over 1000 languages are spoken. Communication is an obstacle to regional ventures necessitating the use of the main colonial languages of English and French. In Melanesia, forms of pidgin English, introduced in the days of the sea-traders, build national cohesion for nations like Papua New Guinea, where 700 indigenous languages are spoken.

Many cultures in relative isolation from one another, have made the Pacific Islands very attractive to anthropologists. Armchair anthropologists have distilled scholarly writings into trite images of romantic cultures. The tourist industry has picked up on these images and sells them to tourists in the form of package tours. The tours guarantee that the tourist image of the island culture will be brought to life. Little is done to allow contemporary indigenous people of the islands to speak of what it means to live there today.

Pacific Islands people struggle with an image problem. Sometimes it is promoted by their own governments but more often by hotels owned by American and Australian companies. Their brochures feature photographs of scantily-clad island women, giving credence to the reputation island women have for being willing and available. Such imagery has served well as a promotional device for Polynesian destinations for a great many years. As long as it is perceived to be profitable, such a marketing practice will not be reformed.

Pacific Island communities are concerned about the images that tourists have of them. They have witnessed the impact of misrepresented cultural values on the behaviour of tourists. Much of the nude and topless bathing, of paying young women to pose half-naked, buying the favors of young island men and women, can be attributed to the unwillingness of the tourist industry to represent the strong values of the cultures being promoted.

Local churches, often the center of island social life, are put in the position of defending the values of the community. On the island of Bora Bora, in Polynesia, women went to work at a new hotel wearing their Sunday-best clothes, long dresses of calico with long sleeves and a high neckline. The hotel was quick to inform them that such dress was not acceptable.

The women were instructed to wear a 'pareu', a piece of fabric wrapped around as a strapless dress. For these women, the pareu was like a robe or housedress, worn only when doing the laundry or cleaning house, never worn for company. Afraid of losing their jobs, the women did not complain to the hotel management but, rather to their menfolk. Many of the men were deacons of the church and took the issue to the Council of Deacons. The Council met with the hotel management, made it clear that the dress-style required by the hotel was totally unacceptable to local community values and a compromise was made.

. . .continued

This story of a church taking action to set right the image tourists get of the local culture, has now been shared throughout the Pacific Islands region, thanks to the work of the Pacific Conference of Churches. Their book and audio-visual resource kit have been circulated to all of the 35 nation-states and territories of the region, overcoming the communication difficulties faced and spreading encouraging news of how people can make tourism work for them, rather than against them.

We here in North America can do our part by becoming familiar with the cultural values of Pacific people we plan to visit. One book written for us is **The South Pacific Handbook** by David Stanley. It gives some history of the people of each island (not just when they were "discovered"), pointers on how to make yourself more welcome by following cultural patterns of respect, suggestions of locally-owned guesthouses to stay in and maps to help get around both the cities and the hiking trails.

A person's attitude will go a lot farther than a book in making a trip successful and less-exploitive of local people. With the Code of Ethics ingrained in us and with an attitude of respect, we can be "responsible tourists" in the Pacific.

Cynthia Biddlecomb worked as Tourism Project Coordinator for the Pacific Conference of Churches, headquartered in Suva, Fiji, in 1981 and in 1985. She authored their book Pacific Tourism: Contrasts in Values and Expectations, published by Lotu Pasifika Productions in 1981 and compiled their audio-visual Tourism Resource Kit in 1985. She is currently a theology student at Pacific School of Religion and on the Board of Directors of the Center for Responsible Tourism.

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A code of ethics for tourists

- Travel in a spirit of humility and with a genuine desire to learn more about the people of your host country. Be sensitively aware of the feelings of other people, thus preventing what might be offensive behaviour on your part. This applies very much to photography.
- Cultivate the habit of listening and observing, rather than merely hearing and seeing.
- Realize that often the people in the country you visit have time concepts and thought patterns different from your own. This does not make them inferior, only different.
- Instead of looking for that "beach paradise", discover the enrichment of seeing a different way of life, through other eyes.
- Acquaint yourself with local customs. What is courteous in one country may be quite the reverse in another — people will be happy to help you.
- Instead of the Western practice of "knowing all the answers", cultivate the habit of asking questions.
- Remember that you are only one of thousands of tourists visiting this country and do not expect special privileges.
- If you really want your experience to be a "home away from home", it is foolish to waste money on travelling.
- When you are shopping, remember that "bargain" you obtained was possible only because of the low wages paid to the maker.
- Do not make promises to people in your host country unless you can carry them through.
- Spend time reflecting on your daily experiences in an attempt to deepen your understanding. It has been said that "what enriches you may rob and violate others".

FIJI SECRET PUBLISHED

A book written in Suva and smuggled out chapter by chapter says racism is not the correct explanation for the coups in Fiji. MICHAEL FIELD reports.

A desire by the ruling class to survive in power, and not racism, were the motivating forces behind last year's Fiji coups according to a book written in secret and which is now on the market. The rise again of the aristocratic elite had angered lesser chiefs and commoners, leading to a growing struggle inside Fiji.

FIJI - SHATTERED COUPS, written by history lecturer Robert Robertson and journalist Akosita Tamanisau, says the country's rulers face "mass Fijian disillusionment and military confusion".

The authors claim foreign journalists were confused into assuming the issue was over race by a rhetoric of indigenous rights and anti-neo colonialism.

The book discounts theories that the United States was behind the coup. "(The U.S.) may have assisted the Taukei movement directly or indirectly, but it remained in our view unlikely that the US was a prime mover or initiator of the events which overwhelmed Fiji in mid-May," it says.

Ms. Tamanisau said in Auckland the book's publication meant she was permanently exiled from Fiji. "It's a sacrifice we've had to make. Under the new decrees the book would be regarded as seditious and going back would be very dangerous."

Two weeks ago Dr. Robertson, a former senior lecturer at the University of the South Pacific and Ms. Tamanisau's husband, was notified by the Fijian Government that he was a prohibited immigrant till 1993.

Ms. Tamanisau said only three people knew the book was being written in Suva. As they completed each chapter a copy was smuggled out of Fiji and another hidden.

A military raid on their home failed to uncover the book in preparation. She said Dr. Robertson worked with a man at the university who was in the front line of the Taukei movement. "He kept a close eye on us," Ms. Tamanisau said.

The couple say in the book that race was the most comfortable explanation for the coups but it was not the correct one. "It neither challenges the intellect nor poses disturbing questions. Few journalists noted that at a personal level racial animosities in Fiji are not strong and that class divisions, even where they assume racial characteristics, are far from insurmountable." They say journalists were unwilling to question the ideological assumptions underpinning racial perceptions.

"The paramouncy of Fijian interests which Brigadier Sitiveni (Rabuka) declared fell too comfortably within the paradigm of indigenous rights, long given expression as "the Pacific way".

While the Taukei movement employed "cultural mystification with relish", it had in fact many similarities to right wing groups in other countries. The authors point to similar statements from a right-wing fundamentalist group in Australia and New Zealand, the Logos Foundation.

The Taukeis clutched at "imperialists" tales and chanted anti-Libyan and pro-western sentiment while claiming to recreate tribal purity and a second indenture for Indians, the authors say.

"It is not too much to suggest that New Zealand and Australia have assisted in the creation of this parody by gullibly swallowing the propaganda bait played out by (American Ambassador to the United Nations) General Vernon Walters and other American officials for essential geostrategic purposes. "They too are unable to discern propaganda and rhetoric from reality, so blinkered are they from the legacies of their own imperial and colonial past. "In time they may appreciate that the neutralism of Vanuatu and Bavadra's Fiji is preferable to the instability of a republic likely to shift the regional balance of power toward the bellicosity of right-wing proxies.

"In time they, like the Taukeists, might come to appreciate more keenly the critical differences between anti-colonialist struggles and nation building.

Reprinted from **THE DOMINION (New Zealand) August 15, 1988.**

RAINFOREST PROTECTION IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

Ten years after independence, the Solomon Islands still face the difficulties that the previous "colonist" government imposed upon this idyllic tropical paradise. Logging still continues.

This group of 350 large and small islands, reefs and atolls, is noted for its diverse flora and fauna, and especially for its speciation (i.e. species diversity between islands). "Even more diverse than the Galapagos Islands", states Jared Diamond, Professor of Physiology, University of California.

Since 1983, the Rainforest Information Centre [RIC] has been involved in tropical forest conservation education in the Solomons. Co-ordination on tropical forest issues culminated in 1987 with the withdrawal of **Levers Pacific Timbers**, the largest logging operator in the Solomon Islands, and a subsidiary of the multinational **Unilever.**

Levers lost S.I.$45 million at auction when their operation folded, as conservationists and customary landowners alike heralded victory. With a moratorium on logging licenses, the tide seemed set to turn.

Not so, unfortunately, as other foreign companies already operating in the Solomons took up the challenge. Korean, Japanese, Australian and Solomon Island companies are at present operating in **New Georgia, Malaita, Guadalcanal** and **Makira** provinces. An estimated one half of the countries accessible low land rainforest has now been logged.

Solomon Islanders are not happy themselves about the aggressive style of logging being practiced here. Typically, consent to log an island or area is characterized by a "minority signing" by a small group of the customary landholders. Disagreement and feuding often follows. Cultural disintegration is greatly accelerated and the environment receives the worst blow of all, deforestation.

Many places in the Solomons are presently subject to logging, but two areas stand out particularly as locations for conservation.

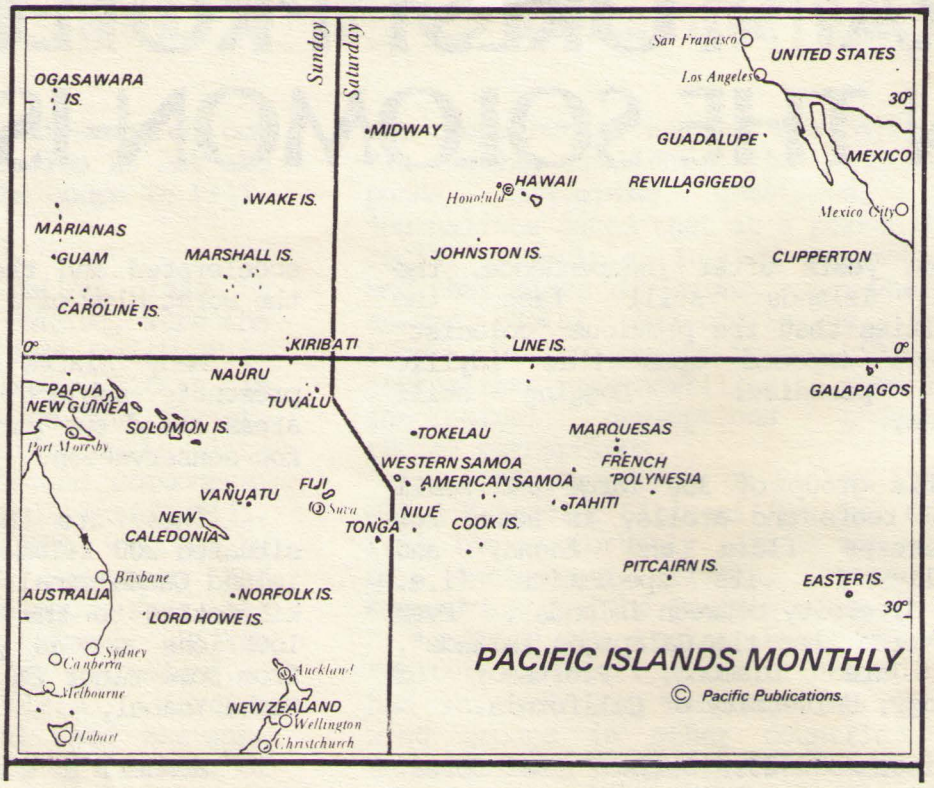
These are the islands of **Rennell**, situated 200 kilometres south of the main island Guadalcanal, and **Santa Ysabel**, 100 kilometres to the north. Both of these locations are as yet undisturbed, apart from some minor felling some years ago on Santa Ysabel.

Rennell is a magnificent atoll, home to the county's largest Polynesian population. Approximately 2500 people live around a large lake on the eastern end of the 60 kilometre long island. Rennell is the world's largest remaining undisturbed "uplifted" coral atoll. Rainforest roots are embedded in the 150 m high elevated coral rock floor, and epiphytes abound. Endemic bird species fly in the delicate green light of the forest, between palms, ancient cycads and leafy hanging vines. Woodchip companies have made proposals to log the island.

Neither the Rennellese nor the Melanesians of Santa Ysabel favour logging. There is a great love of the land and the sea. Even politicians in the capital cities nurture gardens while away from their villages. The ancestral past of all Solomon Islanders is deeply embedded in the rainforest.

The chiefs of Rennell have signed a letter stating their desire to protect the forests of their island, and that in exchange for an access road they will work for World Heritage listing for the island.

Ysabel, too, is sparsely populated, and there are still virgin lowlands where the rainforest meets the sea. One of the RIC's Solomon Islands contacts was on Ysabel recently and wrote "when I arrived



there last Wednesday there was a helicopter with Asian loggers on it (plus the infamous "Branco" of **Foxwood** logging company fame) heading off to look at Ysabel's timber resources". How long for Ysabel?

The Solomon Islands are often overlooked when the issue of tropical deforestation arises. We can be effective in helping the people to protect their forests.

ACTIONS: If you would like to assist the Rainforest Information Centre with its work in the Solomons, you could:-

1) Visit the Solomon Islands, talk to politicians about exploitative companies, write letters to local Honiara newspapers, visit villages and discuss global tropical forest exploitation and erosion, mention examples, Malaysia, Brazil, North Queensland

2) Write to the **International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources** [IUCN], c/o Jeffrey McNeely, Ave. Du Mont Bland, CH 1196 Gland, Switzerland

The **IUCN** can assist the Rennellese to have their island listed with the World Heritage Commission.

3) Subscribe to The World Rainforest Report for a quarterly update on the world rainforest situation (P.O. Box 368, Lismore, NSW 2480, Australia).

FOR MORE INFORMATION, write to **Rainforest Information Centre, P.O. Box 31, Munda, Solomon Islands.**

[Adapted from the **Rainforest Information Centre Newsletter**, August 1988]

Know someone who would be interested in *Tok Blong SPPF*? Send us his/her name, address and interest in the Pacific Islands (if known) and we will send a complimentary copy. Let us know if we can use your name as a reference. Send to SPPF, 409-620 View St., Victoria, B.C., CANADA V8W 1J6.