

The Pacific: Nuclear Testing and Minorities

A Minority Rights Group Report



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THE MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP

is an international research and information unit registered in Britain as an educational charity under the Charities Act of 1960. Its principal aims are –

- To secure justice for minority or majority groups suffering discrimination, by investigating their situation and publicising the facts as widely as possible, to educate and alert public opinion throughout the world.
- To help prevent, through publicity about violations of human rights, such problems from developing into dangerous and destructive conflicts which, when polarised, are very difficult to resolve; and
- To foster, by its research findings, international understanding of the factors which create prejudiced treatment and group tensions, thus helping to promote the growth of a world conscience regarding human rights.

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The Pacific: Nuclear Testing and Minorities

ERICH WEINGARTNER

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The report that follows has been commissioned, and is published, by the Minority Rights Group as a contribution to public understanding of the problem which forms its subject. It does not necessarily represent, in every detail and in all its subjects, the collective view of the Group.

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Cover photo: Fernando Pereira, Greenpeace
Children from Rongelap Island (Marshall Islands),
contaminated by the radioactive fallout from the
Bravo atomic test of 1954, are evacuated to Mejeeto
Island in May 1985, by the Greenpeace ship,
Rainbow Warrior.

THE UN UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF
HUMAN RIGHTS (1948)

ARTICLE 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or status.

Furthermore, no distinction should be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

UN PLAN OF ACTION
FOR THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE DECLARATION ON THE
GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE
TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND
PEOPLES, 1980 :

'8. Member States shall adopt the necessary measures to discourage or prevent the systematic influx of outside immigrants and settlers into Territories under colonial domination, which disrupts the demographic composition of those Territories and may constitute a major obstacle to the genuine exercise of the right to self-determination and independence by the peoples of those Territories.

9. Member States shall oppose all military activities and arrangements by colonial and occupying Powers in the Territories under colonial and racist domination, as such activities and arrangements constitute an obstacle to the full implementation of the Declaration, and shall intensify their efforts with a view to securing the immediate and unconditional withdrawal from colonial Territories of military bases and installations of colonial Powers.'

PREFACE

'No government has ever been honest enough nor has the cynical frankness to admit that its nuclear testing entails health hazards. No government has ever hesitated to expose other people - particularly if they are small and defenceless - to these dangers. The Americans exploded their most powerful bombs among the inhabitants of the Marshall Islands, the English used Christmas Island, surrounded by atolls people by Polynesians. The Russians preferred to make their tests among the peoples of Siberia. The Chinese government chose a region inhabited by Tibetans and Mongols. The French first exploded their bombs in Africa and are now ready to do so in our islands...'

From a speech made by Teariki, the leader of the Polynesia Party Pupu hee aia and elected Deputy to the French National Assembly, to General de Gaulle in 1966 before the beginning of French nuclear testing.

The Minority Rights Group has long been concerned with the human rights of the Pacific peoples. It has published reports on specific peoples and situations and testified at the UN in New York and Geneva and before the US Congress. It became apparent that major issue which affects all Pacific peoples are nuclear testing and militarization. Therefore Minority Rights Group invited Erich Weingartner to write this report, because of his considerable expertise in the area and his links with the Christian churches of the Pacific who are one of the strongest regional organizations protecting the rights of Pacific peoples.

The Pacific: Nuclear Testing and Minorities does not focus on one ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural minority. Erich Weingartner argues persuasively that the peoples of the Pacific islands, in most cases a majority in their own lands, are, in effect, powerless minorities when faced with the economic strength, military might and political domination of the great power states which determine their lives. They are members of one of the poorer regions of the world, yet one which is potentially rich in resources. Despite their former self-sufficiency most Pacific states and territories are dependent on outside aid - which is often inappropriate, elitist and short-term.

The vast distances and sparse populations of the Pacific have been seen as making them ideal for the military testing, storage and disposal of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons by great powers. During World War II the Pacific was a major battle ground. After the war it became a nuclear testing ground for the US in the Marshall Islands and for the UK in Australia and Christmas Island. In the mid-1960s the French government began its nuclear programme in French Polynesia - a programme which continues with underground tests at Mororoa and Fangatoufa Atolls despite widespread international protest. Nuclear testing is almost certainly responsible for the abnormal deaths and sickness which now affect the populations of the test areas. Yet there have been few independent and open medical tests on the peoples and environment affected and, until recently in a few instances, compensation has been derisory.

Nuclear testing must be seen as a violation of the minority rights of the Pacific peoples. They did not choose for their homes to be test sites; they did not know and were not warned of the possible consequences of testing, they could not prevent them; and today they are paying the terrible and still largely unknown price in radiation-related diseases. Today the Pacific peoples face new threats of contamination from incineration of chemical and biological weapons at Johnston Atoll. The social and environmental costs of militarization have been deadly ones.

Politically there have been great strides for many of the Pacific nations as the old colonial empires have been dismantled. Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu - these states and others gained their independence from the UK in the last two decades. But the 'French Overseas Territories' of New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna are still tied to France, politically and economically. There are continuing problems concerning the decolonization process of the US-administered UN Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI). Many of the small territories of the Pacific have chosen not to be independent but to accept a form of local autonomy in return for services and protection from a larger state; others have had various forms of inferior status imposed upon them.

The Minority Rights Group takes no pre-determined position on the question of absolute independence for Pacific nations. It acknowledges the problems which face micro-states, especially those in remote areas with small populations and limited resources where independence can pose a difficult option. If a Pacific nation chooses freely and voluntarily a political future which is other than complete independence then its choice must be respected by the parties to the agreement and the outside world. The minority rights of the peoples of small territories must be safeguarded and their languages and cultures given the support necessary to allow them to survive. What however is unacceptable is when peoples are denied a free and fair choice as to their future status. The denial of a peoples' right to determine their own future is the denial of a basic human right.

Equally, independent and self-governing Pacific nations must take responsibility for ensuring that democracy and human rights - including minority rights - are respected within their countries. Colonialism should not be held responsible for all the problems of the Pacific even though the roots of many of today's conflicts lie in the colonial past. Within Pacific states there are increasing instances of violent ethnic and political conflict and human rights abuse.

This report contains an important message for all those concerned about the degradation of the environment. Nuclear and military testing, extensive logging, open-strip mining, incineration and dumping of toxic waste, drift-net fishing, global warming - all have affected the Pacific ecosystem and will probably have even more drastic effects in the future. The Pacific is part of a global heritage as well as a local ecosystem. It is now up to the whole world to protect that heritage.

Alan Phillips
Executive Director
January 1991

THE NATIONS OF THE PACIFIC

The Geography

It is ironic that some of the world's smallest nations occupy the largest of its geographical entities. The Pacific Ocean covers a third of the earth's surface. If the entire land mass of the globe were superimposed onto the Pacific, it would cover only 80% of its surface.

The true economic and geopolitical significance of the Pacific Ocean is only now beginning to be fully realized by the world's great powers. Until recently, the sheer size and depth of the Pacific precluded adequate exploitation of its resources. With the development of powerful new communications and marine resource technologies, the potential wealth of the Pacific region has attracted the attention of industrialized states. Growth-oriented economies are witnessing the depletion of traditional sources of raw materials, and are eagerly seeking replacements. The size of the Pacific Ocean has also attracted developers of military technologies. The vast distances and sparse non-white population make it ideal for testing, storing and disposal of long-range missiles and weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear, chemical and biological arms. This combination of economic and military factors has helped to make the Pacific Ocean one of the most militarized regions of the world. Even recent positive changes in the post-World War II climate of confrontation between the USA and the USSR are not likely to alter this development.

It has been frequently stated that the year 2000 will usher in the 'Century of the Pacific'.¹ By the 21st Century, it is calculated, the gross national product (GNP) of the states of the Pacific basin will account for 50% of the world's total.² Unfortunately, reference to the 'Pacific Basin' usually

includes only the states surrounding the Pacific rim, ie. those of Australasia, East Asia, and the Americas. And of these, it is only the economically strong – USA, Canada, Japan and Australia/New Zealand – who are likely to dominate. A secondary share will go to the four Asian 'Newly Industrializing Countries' (NICs) of Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong. With the acquisition of Hong Kong in 1997, China's influence in the Pacific is also likely to increase.

The common notion of the Pacific basin as an uninhabited resource ripe for exploitation – or a 'playground of the great powers', as some would have it – ignores the existence of 33 Pacific island states and territories³ with a combined population of over eight million inhabitants.⁴ Even if one accepts 'Oceania' as a continent, the overwhelming size of Australia and New Zealand still relegates the Pacific islands to minority status.

Eighteenth Century geographers divided the Pacific islands into three major groupings. Although the original reasons for this division have largely lost their validity, modern maps still bear the names Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia.

Micronesia: Thus named because of the tiny size of its islands, Micronesia extends north of the Equator and west of the Date Line. Barely 400,000 inhabitants occupy seven separate political entities. The Federated States of Micronesia incorporate four states: Pohnpei, Truk, Yap and Kosrae. The remaining six political entities are Guam, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, the Northern Mariana Islands and Belau (whose alternate spelling, 'Palau', is officially recognized by its Constitution and more commonly used internationally).

Table 1 Pacific States and Territories

Micronesia

ENTITY	POPULATION	AREA (sq.kms)	POLITICAL STATUS	CAPITAL	ECONOMIC BASE
FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA	90,407	700	Self Gov. (1979); Independent/Free Assoc. w/US (1986)	Kolonia	US aid, fishing, copra, tourism
Pohnpei	28,879	345	FSM State	Kolonia	-
Truk	44,000	127	FSM State	Moen	-
Yap 1	1,080	119	FSM State	Colonia	-
Kosrae	6,448	109	FSM State	Lelu	-
GUAM	126,800	554	Unincorporated US Territory (1898)	Agana	Military, tourism, US aid
KIRIBATI	61,400	689	Independent (UK, 1979)	Tarawa	British aid, fishing rights, copra
MARSHALL ISLANDS	39,060	181	Self Gov. (1979); Independent/Free Assoc. w/US (1986)	Majuro	US aid, fishing copra,
NAURU	8,600	21	Independent (Aus, 1968)	Yaren	Phosphate, investments
NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS	19,700	477	US Commonwealth (in effect 1976; formalized 1986)	Saipan	US aid, tourism
BELAU/PALAU	13,772	495	Self Gov. (1981); Trust Territory of US Territory of U.S.	Koror	US/TTPI funding, tourism, fishing

Population – all 1986 except Kiribati, Nauru, 1984.

Melanesia

ENTITY	POPULATION	AREA (sq.kms)	POLITICAL STATUS	CAPITAL	ECONOMIC BASE
FIJI	715,000	18,316	Independent (UK, 1970)	Suva	Sugar, tourism timber, gold
KANAKY/ NEW CALEDONIA	145,400	19,085	Fr Overseas Territory (1958); annexed (1853)	Noumea	Minerals, especially nickel
PAPUA NEW GUINEA (PNG)	3,350,000	461,261	Independent (Aus, 1975)	Port Moresby	Australian aid, minerals, subsistence
SOLOMON ISLANDS	251,000	28,502	Independent (UK, 1978)	Honiara	Subsistence, copra, palm oil
VANUATU	132,000	11,990	Independent (UK/Fr, 1980)	Port Vila	Copra, fish, coffee

Population - all 1984 except Fiji, 1987

Polynesia

AMERICAN SAMOA	37,300	189	Unincorporated US Territory (1899)	Pago Pago	US aid tuna canneries
COOK ISLANDS	16,000	241	Self gov. (1965); in Free Assoc. w/NZ	Avarua	Citrus fruit, postage stamps, tourism
RAPA NUI/ EASTER ISLAND	2,130	171	Territory of Chile	Hanga Roa	Tourism, aid from Chile
FRENCH POLYNESIA	159,000	3,995	Fr Overseas Territory (1958); annexed (1842)	Papeete, Tahiti	French military, admin., tourism
HAWAII	1,082,500	16,710	US State (1959); US Territory (1898)	Honolulu Oahu	Tourism, military, agriculture
NIUE	3,000	259	Self gov. (1974); in Free Assoc. w/NZ	Alofi	Fruit, copra, subsistence
NORFOLK ISLAND	1,800	34	Australian Territory	Kingston	Tourism
PITCAIRN	59	36	UK colony	Adamstown	Postage stamps (last in Pacific)
TOKELAU	1,572	10	NZ Territory (1948)	(Office in Apia, WS)	Subsistence
TONGA	104,000	668	Independent (UK, 1970)	Nuku'alofa, Tongatapu	Agriculture, timber, fishing
TUVALU	8,200	26	Independent) (UK, 1978	Funafuti	Subsistence, copra
WALLIS AND FUTUNA	11,300	254	Fr Overseas Territory (1958); annexed (1842)	Mata Utu	Subsistence, fishing, copra
WESTERN SAMOA	159,000	2,933	Independent (NZ, 1962)	Apia, Upolu	Subsistence, copra, cocoa

Population - at various times in 1980's

From *The Pacific Islands*, Hawaii Geographical Society Publications, 1988.

Melanesia: South of the Equator and west of the Date Line, Melanesia makes up 97% of the Pacific islands' land surface and 76% of their population. It includes New Guinea, the largest Pacific island, divided equally between the independent nation of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and West Papua (the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya) with a combined population of 5,200,000. Four other entities normally considered part of Melanesia are the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu (formerly New Hebrides), Kanaky (the name preferred by the Melanesian population, although the

official name is New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands), and Fiji. Excluding West Papua, the combined population of these island states is about 4,600,000.

Polynesia: Stretching across the greatest distances, the 'Polynesian triangle' extends from Hawaii near the Tropic of Cancer in the north, to Aotearoa/New Zealand in the south, to Rapa Nui (Easter Island) in the east, just south of the Tropic of Capricorn. Eleven additional political entities fall approximately within this triangle: American Samoa,

Western Samoa, Wallis and Futuna, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Niue, Norfolk Island, Pitcairn, Tokelau, Tonga, and Tuvalu.

The peoples

Racially and culturally, the boundaries between these geographical areas are not precise. Generalizations about Pacific islanders have been maintained by popular myths promoted by travel agents and the entertainment industry. According to these myths, Melanesians are supposed to be sedentary with a close relationship to their land. They are reputed to be fierce warriors, descendants of cannibals. Polynesians, on the other hand, are seen as long-distance seafaring peoples, easy-going, friendly and relaxed.

The reality is much more complex.⁵ Melanesians, racially related to the Australian Aborigines, occupy the larger islands and have a correspondingly greater diversity of terrain, which in turn resulted in a greater diversity of economies, languages and cultures. With differentiated resources available on the one hand to inhabitants of inland highlands and on the other to coastal dwellers, Melanesians developed a complex system of trade routes. Economic viability and personal achievement generally outweighed hereditary class in Melanesia, resulting in far less stratified, more egalitarian social structures. Political power could be obtained through successful economic activities.

This contrasts with Polynesian and Micronesian societies, where social stratification is much more pronounced. On small islands, land-based and sea-based resources are readily available to all and trade is therefore not highly developed. Economic power is usually obtained only through the political power due to hereditary chiefs. Even today, the influence of the chiefly class in this part of the Pacific is significant, as can be illustrated by contrasting the role played by customary chiefs in recent developments in Kanaky (New Caledonia) and Fiji. Indigenous Fijians are considered to be racially related to Melanesia, but are culturally Polynesian, particularly in social structure. The military coup of May 1987 would not have been possible had Colonel Rabuka not obtained the agreement of the customary chiefs. The 1990 Constitution accords the Great Council of Chiefs the authority to choose the President and almost all members of the Senate.

In Kanaky, the political role of chiefs has been far more ambiguous. The French government has often sought to obtain Melanesian acquiescence by providing special status for chiefs. This has never worked. Within the political structure of the independence movement, individual ability, communal approval, and regional and political representation are determining factors in the choice of leaders. Those chiefs who wished to play a greater political role have had to prove themselves politically, in some cases by forming their own political parties.

Polynesians, perhaps because of their lighter skin colouring, have generally been regarded by European colonizers as culturally superior to Melanesians. This perception is bound to change as the Pacific islanders become more integrated into the world capitalist system. The abundance of resources in the large Melanesian islands as well as the trade experience and cultural egalitarianism of Melanesian people may be more conducive to success in capitalist ventures than the Polynesian class systems.

External interest in the opportunities of the Pacific, as well as

increased mobility and migration within the Pacific itself has produced a complex mix of races, cultures and languages. In some island states, the indigenous populations are now outnumbered by foreign newcomers. Europeans and, increasingly, Asians are most numerous in Australia and New Zealand, of course, since their temperate climates are similar to parts of Europe. Hawaii and Kanaky, with their sub-tropical environments, also have significant numbers of Europeans while Asians outnumber the indigenous people in Fiji and Hawaii.

There has been a considerable amount of racial mixing, particularly in Polynesia and parts of Micronesia. Practically all of the 'indigenous' people of Hawaii, Tahiti, Marquesas and Cook Islands, for example, have some non-Polynesian blood. According to recent studies, Guam's 'native' people have a genetic origin which is 36% European and 17% Filipino.

The languages

Nearly one quarter of all the world's languages are spoken by the peoples of the Pacific. This includes about 1200 languages and many more dialects. Most languages have only a small number of speakers - the average number a mere 5000.

There are three basic language groups. The over 250 languages spoken by Australian Aborigines belong to a group of their own and are not used elsewhere in Oceania. The same goes for the approximately 740 languages spoken on the island of New Guinea. All remaining indigenous Pacific languages belong to the Austronesian (Malayo-Polynesian) family, the most widely-spread language group in the world, which stretches from Madagascar to Easter Island. About 450 of these are found only in the Pacific Islands.

This profusion of languages has not facilitated indigenous cross-cultural communication and led to the quick spread of European languages for such purposes. The most widespread is English, with French in a diminishing second place, spoken in New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, French Polynesia and parts of Vanuatu. Indonesian is the official language of Irian Jaya and Spanish of the Easter Islands, though neither of these languages is likely to have a larger impact in the Pacific.

The newest language, with an extremely rapid development in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, is based on Melanesian grammatical principles, but incorporates words mainly from English, and to a lesser extent from Melanesian and other sources. Pidgin, sometimes known as Neo-Melanesian, is an easy language to learn and has provided a bridge among the 112 languages of Vanuatu, 88 languages of the Solomons and 720 languages of PNG. In PNG, pidgin has become the lingua franca of more than a quarter of the population and is spoken in Parliament, though English remains the language of intellectuals.

Most Pacific Islanders today speak three languages; their local dialect, the prevailing national language, and an international language. The problem is that formal education is almost always in a foreign language. This creates serious retarding pressures on local languages. The question relating to the future of Pacific languages is one which preoccupies many Pacific governments. Language being an integral part of any culture, the demise of Pacific languages would signal the demise also of Pacific cultures.

HISTORY

Pre-colonial history

Archaeological evidence indicates that almost all plant, animal and human life originally came to the Pacific from Asia. Some 50,000 years ago, during the last ice age, water levels were much lower than today. The earliest homo sapiens were able to cross the narrow water spaces between present-day Indonesia and both New Guinea and Australia. This early migration appears to have been very sporadic, involving extremely small numbers over thousands of years. Early settlers were hunters and gatherers, requiring large tracts of land for their survival. Seafaring technology was extremely primitive. Dugout canoes appear to have been developed only as the ice age ended, approximately 8000 to 10,000 years ago.

At that time, sea levels rose, cutting off communication between New Guinea and Australia. This accounts for the completely different development, both culturally and linguistically, of their indigenous populations. Migration to New Guinea seems to have continued in succeeding millennia. Agriculture and pig husbandry were most likely introduced by such migrants and later spread throughout Melanesia. These improvements allowed for greater population densities, particularly in coastal regions. The same development does not appear to have taken place among Aborigines of Australia.

Immigrants from Asia also brought more efficient technologies of marine transport and began to settle the New Britain/New Ireland islands (now part of PNG) as far back as 5000 years ago. There is archaeological evidence of a slow southeastward expansion through a chain of islands visible one from another in what is now the Solomon Islands.

Increased population densities, improvements in canoe transport and the development of fishing most likely accounts for the discovery of islands farther distant. Much of western Micronesia was settled by migrants from Indonesia and the Philippines in the period from 5500 to 4000 years ago. About the same time, Vanuatu and Kanaky were settled from the Solomon Islands. There is no evidence of contact with either Australia or New Zealand.

From this time onwards the distances travelled began to increase remarkably. The Marshall Islands were reached about 4000 years ago, whether from Vanuatu or western Micronesia is unclear. Fiji was almost certainly settled from Vanuatu 3500 years ago. Three centuries later, the Proto-Polynesian people reached Tonga and subsequently settled Samoa as well. It took another 1000 years, at about the beginning of the Christian era, before the next expansion brought settlers to the Marquesas Islands, 4000 kilometres to the east. Thus Polynesian sailors proved themselves to be some of the world's most remarkable navigators, perhaps the greatest of all time. In the 500 years from about 300 to 800 AD, the 'Polynesian triangle' became the last part of the earth's surface (with the exception of Antarctica) to be settled by humans. Aotearoa appears to have been discovered by the ancestors of the Maori people around 750 AD, or about 750 years before Christopher Columbus 'discovered' America.

The rapid expansion throughout Polynesia accounts for the fact that Polynesian languages and cultures are fewer and more closely related than those of either Melanesia or Micronesia. From Hawaii through French Polynesia through the Cook Islands to Aotearoa, islanders can generally understand, if not speak, each other's languages.

Yet preservation of language is expensive. It requires appropriate educational means, the development of indigenous literature, dictionaries and other resources. In a region where presently almost all formal education is taught through foreign languages, this would be an enormous undertaking. The economic returns of such efforts are bound to be negative, since all political and financial transactions require common, rather than multiple languages. Cultural ministries are also faced with the question as to which among the dozens of competing local languages ought to be promoted. Even on a national scale, the prevailing languages will be those which are backed by political and economic power.

The mass media have only exacerbated the dilemma. On the one hand, recording technology has permitted languages to be studied and catalogued more effectively. On the other hand, radio has had to cater to the largest possible audiences, and television programming has largely been imported from foreign sources.

Foreign control

The status of the 25 political entities identified among the Pacific island territories varies (see Table 1 overleaf). Only nine had achieved independence by 1990. On the other hand, only one still calls itself a colony. This is the island of Pitcairn, populated largely by the descendants of the 'Bounty' mutineers, which is the last British colony, indeed the only colony, left in the Pacific. Other outside powers have invented a creative variety of political forms to disguise the limitations imposed on the sovereignty of their clients.

Melanesia has the greatest number of independent states, four out of five, with only one which is still a French 'Overseas Territory'.

In **Micronesia**, the USA is the leading foreign power. Only two states have gained their independence, two are independent in Free Association with the USA, one is a 'self-governing' Trust Territory of the USA, one is a US 'Commonwealth', and one is an 'unincorporated' US territory.

In **Polynesia**, there are three independent states. Two more are French Overseas Territories, four are territories of Australia, Chile, New Zealand and the USA respectively, two are 'self-governing' in Free Association with New Zealand, and one, is a state of the USA.

Direct administration is only one way of exercising foreign control, of course. The report which follows will illustrate the long struggle of Pacific island nations to gain independence and full sovereignty over their social, political, economic and ecological future.

Further development of Polynesian technology was probably hampered by the low populations and limited resources available on the islands. The exception might have been the Maoris, who had access to resources unknown previously, and enough land to support a great population expansion. But although their agricultural and military technologies reached relatively high levels, their tropical Polynesian culture experienced a slow and difficult adaptation to the colder climate. By the time the Europeans arrived after more than 900 years of Maori occupation, the total Maori population had grown to only one quarter of a million.

The colonial period

Under the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494, the entire Pacific Ocean came under the Spanish sphere of influence. This was rather premature, since Europeans began to arrive in the Pacific only in the early 16th Century. Sailing eastwards the Portuguese reached as far as West Papua in 1511. The Spanish sailor Ferdinand Magellan, after discovering the strait that bears his name on the southern tip of the Americas, was the first to cross the Pacific Ocean, reaching Guam in 1521.

For the following 300 years, Guam was the only Pacific island that held any real interest for Spain, and that primarily because of its role as a port of call for Spanish galleons on their way to the Philippines. Papua New Guinea owes its name to Portuguese and Spanish explorers who travelled to the island in 1526 and 1545, naming it 'Ilhas dos Papuas' and 'Nueva Guinea' respectively. By the end of the 16th Century, the Spanish began to colonize the Solomon islands.

The Dutch entered the Pacific at the beginning of the 17th Century, making numerous landfalls in islands as far apart as West Papua and Easter Island. In 1642-43, the Dutch navigator Abel Tasman, for example, 'discovered' the island of Tasmania (named after him), Aotearoa, Tonga and the northeastern reefs of Fiji.

In the latter half of the 17th Century, Britain began to explore the Pacific in search of a mythical southern continent. From 1769 to 1778, Captain James Cook made three voyages which not only disproved the existence of such a continent, but charted the Society Islands, the north and south islands of Aotearoa, the east coast of Australia, numerous islands in the Cook group, Niue, Tonga, Norfolk Island, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Easter Island, the Marquesas and Hawaii, where he was killed in 1779. In 1788 the British established their first settlement in Australia at Port Jackson (Sydney). In 1789, Captain William Bligh took his fateful voyage on the 'Bounty'. Having been set adrift in an open boat with some of his crew, Bligh travelled from Tonga to Timor. On the way, he sighted the main islands of Fiji, to which he returned in 1792.

The impact of Europeans on the Pacific was disastrous to the native populations. Foreign diseases brought to the pristine islands ravaged entire populations. Between 1668 and 1740, for example, the Chamorro population of Guam declined from over 80,000 to 5000.

By the end of the 18th Century, the French, the Americans and even the Russians began to explore the Pacific. Until the mid-19th Century however, colonial powers took only a peripheral interest in the Pacific Islands. They had other worlds to conquer and empires to maintain. In several instances, metropolitan authorities actually refused offers to acquire possessions. The British Colonial Office, for

example, refused the first offer by Chief Cakobau to cede Fiji to Britain in 1849. Only 25 years later did they accept under pressure from colonial governments in Australia and New Zealand.

Yet the destruction went beyond the demographic. Another foreign influence was to have a profound effect on the culture and subsequent history of the Pacific: the arrival of Christianity. Many stories of idyllic paradise in the Pacific reached European capitals. The newly-founded London Missionary Society (LMS) decided to dispatch 18 evangelists to Tahiti in 1797. Unsuccessful at first, the mission gained a powerful ally in 1815. Reminiscent of the conversion of Emperor Constantine, Tahitian chief Pomare II adopted Christianity and then routed a rival clan in battle.

From this point on, the spread of Christianity was so thorough that today indigenous Pacific religions have almost completely disappeared. The LMS was wise enough to realize that locals made better missionaries than foreigners. In 1823 the Reverend John Williams began to take Polynesian missionaries to the Cook Islands group, in 1830 to Samoa. A 1982 study documents how over 1000 Samoan, Cook Islander, Niuean, Fijian, Tongan and Tuvaluan missionaries served in New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and elsewhere.⁶

Whereas foreign missionaries have often stressed Western values, morality and social structures, indigenous missionaries adapted Christianity to local customs. Unique forms of song and dance were created for worship, and the universalist character of the Christian message helped to make Pacific Islanders aware of their common interests. Churches came to have a powerful influence on the political process in most Pacific Islands, with both positive and negative consequences.

The arrival of Roman Catholic missionaries came some years later, in 1834. Unfortunately, they arrived in the already Christianized areas of Tahiti and were chased away by local Protestants. The French navy later responded by threats, thus setting a pattern of backing Catholic missionaries with military force in French Polynesia, the Marquesas, New Caledonia and Vanuatu. Even today, Protestants and Catholics often find themselves on opposite sides of political conflicts.

By the end of the 19th Century, almost the entire Pacific basin was divided among the great European powers and the USA. Britain proclaimed sovereignty over Aotearoa with the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840. Britain acquired Fiji in 1874. In 1884 Britain and Germany divided the portion of New Guinea not claimed by the Dutch; Britain gained control over Papua, the southeastern part of the island. Within a few years, Britain also took the Cook Islands, Tokelau, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. It was one of three powers to contest Samoa, but eventually gave up this quest in exchange for acquiring the protectorate of Tonga, Niue and the southern Solomon Islands.

France had meanwhile extended its military control over eastern Polynesia, including the Marquesas, and in mid-century took control of Kanaky. Later it declared protectorates over Wallis and Futuna. Conflicting claims by both Britain and France over Vanuatu resulted in the compromise establishment of a 'condominium', a joint British-French administration, in 1906.

WORLD WAR II AND ITS AFTERMATH

Germany was a late-comer in the rush for colonies in the Pacific. It had already established itself on the northeast coast of New Guinea, and also annexed neighbouring New Britain and New Ireland. It declared a protectorate over the Marshall Islands and some years later expanded this to the phosphate-rich island Nauru, south of the equator. When Spain lost the war against the USA, Germany purchased the rest of Micronesia except Guam, and also received part of Samoa when that area was partitioned.

The USA acquired the Philippines and Guam in 1898 after its victory over Spain. It also annexed Hawaii in the same year. A year later, it acquired sovereignty over Eastern Samoa as a territory under naval control. The century ended with Spain withdrawing from the Pacific and Russia, after an ill-fated adventure in Hawaii, failing to establish itself in the islands.

Once Australia and New Zealand became self-governing dominions, Britain transferred some of its territories to them. In 1901 the Cook Islands formally became a part of New Zealand and in 1906 Australia accepted control of Papua. World War I had little direct effect on Pacific Islanders. After the war, the German colonies became mandated territories of the League of Nations, to be administered by those who had occupied them soon after the outbreak of war in Europe. New Guinea thus came to be administered by Australia, Western Samoa by New Zealand, the Caroline, Mariana and the Marshall Islands by Japan, and Nauru jointly by Australia, Britain and New Zealand, though Australia assumed administration responsibilities for the other two. In 1935, Japan withdrew from the League of Nations and fortified the Caroline, Marshall and Mariana Islands in preparation for its Pacific adventures during World War II.

If World War I largely ignored the Pacific, the greatest naval war in history was fought in the Pacific during World War II. It pitted Japan on the one side against Britain, the Netherlands, Australia and above all the USA, on the other. Within fewer than 14 hours on 7 December 1941, Japan launched its surprise attack on Pearl Harbour, and simultaneously struck Malaya, Thailand, the Philippines, Guam, Hong Kong and Wake Island.

The brilliantly executed attack on Pearl Harbour became Japan's biggest military mistake. Not only did Japan's attack strike mostly outdated battleships, missing new aircraft carriers, but it forced the USA into a war it had hitherto avoided because of isolationist sentiments back home. Not that the USA was unprepared. In response to the rising militarism of Japan in the 1920s and 1930s, the USA had embarked on a massive programme of shipbuilding and naval deployment. The Navy was eager for engagement and Pearl Harbour provided the political rationale.

Within the next five months, the Japanese managed to capture Singapore, the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), the Philippines, Burma, Rabaul (capital of New Guinea) and the Solomon Islands. The harshness of Japanese rule has passed into legend – its forced migration and labour, cruel punishments, starvation and massacres – killed thousands of island people. Of 1200 Naureans deported to Truk, for example, one third died. By this time Australia had been reinforced by the USA and a combined attack was launched against Japanese efforts to take Port Moresby, capital of Papua. Having been repulsed by sea, the Japanese attempted to take Port Moresby by land in a campaign that ended in defeat only six months later. The USA adopted a strategy of island-hopping, retaking one island after another in order to gradually surround Japan itself. The battles proved costly, both in human casualties and in equipment destroyed. Almost 50 years later, the Pacific islands are still littered with the rusting debris of cannons, ships and airplanes. Pacific place names have gone down in history as battle sites: the Coral Sea, Midway, Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima. The battle to secure Okinawa was the costliest of the whole war. Three months of fierce fighting produced 122,520 casualties among soldiers⁷ and an additional 160,000 civilian dead.⁸

On 6 August 1945, a secret weapon was loaded onto a B-29 bomber at Tinian in the Marianas and exploded that morning over the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Three days later, a second atom bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, and five days after that the Japanese government surrendered unconditionally.

With every European colonial power preoccupied with its own postwar reconstruction and American troops occupying most of the Pacific, the prevailing colonial rivalries were muted and the USA moved into the vacuum. Although the USSR was an ally of the USA in World War II, they were denied any role in the occupation of Japan and had to be content with remaining in the northern part of Korea, Manchuria in China, and the southern part of Sakhalin Island and the Kuriles, which they had invaded in the closing days of the conflict. By the end of the war, the USA had managed to occupy or build several thousand bases in the Pacific and stated its intention to maintain control of them.⁹ The Pacific could now be considered an 'American Lake'.

The USA was the last great power to acquire colonies in the Pacific, and it is the last to grant any of these colonies complete and unconditional independence. After the war, there were substantial pressures from the US military to

annex the island territories for which so many lives had been lost. But the declared US war aims had precluded any territorial ambitions, and US politicians found it untenable to acquire colonies while simultaneously encouraging other powers to give up theirs.

The compromise was provided by the newly-created United Nations (UN), over which the USA had substantial influence. The US insisted on including reference to 'security trusteeships' in the UN Charter, with the Japanese mandated territories, dating from the League of Nations, specifically in mind. The UN Security Council entered into such a trusteeship with the USA in 1947. This arrangement allowed the US military to control a vast area of the Pacific for security reasons, formally shielding the USA from the charge of having acquired colonial territory.

Decolonization

In 1947, the colonial powers of the Pacific established the South Pacific Commission, an intergovernmental organization aiming at facilitating social, economic, medical and educational development. Though it has since become a body whose membership includes independent Pacific states, it initially served to keep the UN at a distance as it was seen to be less than sympathetic to colonial governments. Political matters were, therefore, expressly prohibited from the agenda of the South Pacific Commission.

The prevailing anti-colonial mood among an increasing number of UN member states did, however, exercise at least moral pressures in the Pacific toward decolonization. The way in which colonial powers responded varied greatly.

New Zealand: The first Pacific island state to attain independence was Western Samoa. Following a referendum on a constitution, it opted to separate from New Zealand in 1962. Not all colonies were as eager to attain independence, however. The Cook, Niue and Tokelau islanders insisted on retaining their New Zealand citizenship and requested New Zealand to maintain responsibility for defense and foreign affairs. Given their extremely small populations, it also left them more options as individuals. In 1965 the Cook Islands, and in 1974 Niue, became 'self-governing in free association with New Zealand.' Tokelau opted to remain a dependency of New Zealand. In all three cases, there are presently a greater number of islanders resident in New Zealand than on the islands themselves.

Although the UN considered the idea of 'free association' as one of the acceptable outcomes of decolonization (the other two being independence and integration), the meaning of this category has varied widely according to the power applying it. Two issues in particular continue to trouble its application: firstly, to what extent is 'free association' a permanent or temporary arrangement; secondly, to what extent does it include an independent foreign affairs capacity?

United Kingdom: The second most eager power to divest itself of colonies after the war was Britain, which found itself too weakened to maintain its empire and wished instead to maintain a positive economic relationship with independent members of the British Commonwealth. From 1962 onwards, it made a conscious effort to rid itself of Pacific and other dependencies. Since Britain had always strengthened the chiefly systems, the transitions by and large were smooth.

The Kingdom of Tonga had always been a special case. Already in the 19th Century, Tonga signed treaties with France, Germany, Britain and the USA to recognize its independence. At the turn of the century, Britain signed a treaty to transact Tonga's foreign affairs. In 1970 Tonga became completely independent of Britain and joined the Commonwealth.

In 1970 Fiji also obtained its independence. Although there was no referendum or broadly-based constitutional planning committee, negotiations aimed to create a system which would avoid a potential conflict between Fiji's two major populations, Melanesians and Indians. British colonial authorities had brought to Fiji a large number of indentured labourers from India as sugar plantation workers. After the indenture system was abolished in 1920, most of the Indians remained and by 1970 outnumbered indigenous Fijians. The constitution aimed to give equal voice to Indo-Fijians without threatening ethnic Fijians' political control.

In 1976 the Gilbert and Ellice Islands were divided. Their original merger had been an artificial one, uniting a Polynesian and a Melanesian group. The Polynesian Ellice Islands was renamed Tuvalu and attained independence two years later. That same year, 1978, the Solomon Islands also achieved independence. In 1979, the Gilbert Islands were declared an independent republic under the new name Kiribati. In the same year, the USA signed friendship treaties with both Tuvalu and Kiribati, renouncing any further claims to islands in the two groups. Most difficult was the birth of Vanuatu (meaning 'Our Land') from the New Hebrides in 1980, the only British territory in the Pacific to engage in a protracted struggle for independence. The problem here was the unwillingness of France, the second 'condominium' power, to decolonize.

Australia: In 1949 Papua and New Guinea were administratively merged and became the largest of all Pacific colonies, with a larger population than all the others combined. Australia was not able to inspire much cohesion among the diverse languages and cultural groups, nor was literacy much advanced when Papua New Guinea gained independence in 1975. The greatest achievement of Australia may have been their creation of a relatively strong and unified army.

Nauruans successfully negotiated their independence from the three trust powers through the UN. It is one place the British Phosphate Commissioners (Britain, New Zealand and Australia) would have liked to continue to control because of the island's rich phosphate resources. They agreed to independence in 1968 and handed over control of the phosphate industry in 1970 to the Nauruan government.

The Netherlands, with control of the second largest colony in the region, virtually ignored West New Guinea for a century. After losing Indonesia in the 1950s, considerable financial resources were expended to develop the territory. Unfortunately, it was too late. Pressures from Indonesia and the USA in 1963 caused the Netherlands to cede the territory which would become 'Irian Barat' and, later, 'Irian Jaya', to Indonesia. In 1969 Indonesia staged an unconvincing referendum among West Papuans and claimed unanimous assent to annexation.

The USA's interests in the Pacific have been almost exclusively military and geo-strategic. Hawaii, whose transformation into a republic in 1894 amounted to a coup by Americans, attained US statehood in 1959. It supports the

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biggest offshore US military bases. **Guam** was acquired from Spain by military conquest and remains a military fortress. It is an 'unincorporated US territory'. In effect it is a US colony, administered under the 'Organic Act of Guam' 1950, which provides legislative local autonomy, supervised by the US Department of the Interior. Persons born in Guam have full US citizenship, but are not allowed to vote in US national elections.

American Samoa was ruled by the commander of the American naval base on the island for the first 50 years of the 20th Century. Although 1954 saw the advent of a civilian administration, American Samoa remains an 'unincorporated US territory'.

The United States **Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands** is the last such UN creation. The USA's strategic interests in these islands make it a reluctant decolonizing power. The Northern Mariana islands have been incorporated into the USA as a 'Commonwealth'. In a legal manoeuvre named 'Compact of Free Association', the USA has created a method of retaining control without the nuisance value of UN supervision. **Belau (Palau)** became a self-governing republic in association with the USA in 1981, but its anti-nuclear constitution has created problems in its relationship with the USA. The Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia (**Kosrae, Pohnpei, Truk and Yap**) became self-governing republics and implemented the Compact of Free Association with the USA in 1986.

France's determination to hold on to her colonies has not lessened even with the coming to power of socialist governments in the 1980s. The reasons for this are economic, military, geopolitical, and, perhaps also, France's determination to see itself as a world power. In the case of **Vanuatu**, France reluctantly agreed to independence, but immediately participated in destabilization efforts and negative media campaigns.

France argues that its territories are already in a form of free association and, therefore, do not fall under the UN's mandate for decolonization. In 1958, during Charles de Gaulle's referendum on the constitution of the Fifth Republic, colonies were offered the status of 'French Overseas Territory'. Only the West African colony of Guinea chose to reject the constitution. De Gaulle had warned that a negative vote would mean the immediate withdrawal of all French aid. In Guinea, the threat was implemented with a vengeance. French officials were even ordered to remove telephones, air conditioners and other installations on leaving.

New Caledonia has the world's second largest nickel deposits. French Polynesia is the staging ground for France's nuclear tests. Wallis and Futuna have very small populations (15,000), practically no resources and are dependent on France's subsidies, as well as jobs in the other French possessions. All remain French Overseas Territories. With the allotment of the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zones around its island atolls, France considers itself the second largest maritime power in the world, a claim that would be lost if universal independence for Pacific territories were to become a reality.

The end of World War II left the USA and the USSR as the main protagonists in world politics. These allies of convenience in the struggle against fascism now confronted each other as antagonists in the struggle for world supremacy.

The USSR, having lost some 20 million people in the war, acquired a series of buffer states in Europe, but found its Soviet Asian territory more difficult to secure. Following the communist victory in China in 1948, Sino-Soviet relations became increasingly troubled. The USSR's client state in North Korea, having drawn China onto its side during the Korean war, proved equally problematic. President Kim Il Sung, a protege of Stalin, was adept at using the Sino-Soviet rift to his advantage. The Pacific war had shown the USSR the importance of sea power in geopolitical confrontation, but surrounded by some of the USA's largest military bases, the USSR had virtually no easily accessible port of entry to service its ships.

The USA, meanwhile, had shifted ideological positions from President Franklin D. Roosevelt's internationalism to the extremely hard line form of 'containment' advocated by his successor, President Harry S. Truman. Backed by virulent anti-communism, the USA's interpretation of every Soviet move was painted with the brush of 'Soviet expansionism'. This gave a virtually unchallenged rationale for the rapid militarization of the Pacific. The legitimate liberation and independence struggles of the people of Southeast Asia and the Pacific, whether in the Philippines, China, Korea, Indochina, Indonesia or elsewhere, were countered by sheer military force and the promise of economic aid for those who aligned themselves with the USA.

Military bases

Planning for US military bases in the Pacific began early during World War II. President Roosevelt asked for a study to be undertaken in 1942 concerning requirements to create a post-war 'International Police Force'. A Joint Strategic Survey Committee began to outline a global plan of military bases extending from the Atlantic through the Arctic to the Pacific. General George Marshall, Army Chief of Staff, argued for a 'forward defence' strategy. This would extend radically the American borders and have two consequences. Firstly, it would give the USA the possibility to define the world order after the war. In the words of General Marshall, 'the peace of the entire world... can be maintained only by the strong.'¹⁰ Secondly, in a nuclear world it would also draw firepower away from the US mainland.

There was an additional consideration. By the end of the war, aviation technology had reached a level which would radically alter post-war commercial transactions. US commercial aviation would benefit from air rights obtained on the basis of military installations. This alliance of military and commercial aims was not new for the Pacific. Early colonization also relied on such connections. In the post-war era, however, the degree of hypocrisy involved in this relationship reached unprecedented levels. It allowed for some of the most repressive governments in the world to be defended militarily for commercial benefit under the guise of maintaining peace, stability and democracy. Base construction in the Pacific began while the war was in progress. Japanese bases were demolished by bombing raids before combat units were engaged. After each island was retaken, construction troops would rebuild base infrastructures. In the case of Guam, for example, the main cities, dock facilities, water and road systems were reduced to

rubble by the bombing of July 1944. In less than a year, 37,000 US troops had constructed 36 docking piers, a 103-mile road network, over 700 warehouses, a vast fuel depot, numerous airfields and hangars. The Pacific became the site for huge repair and logistics bases, backed by hundreds of other naval bases. Ninety per cent of all naval base construction in World War II took place in the Pacific. Fifteen of the US Navy's 18 major bases in 1945 were in the Pacific. Of 75 foreign bases proposed in the US Navy's 'Basic Post-War Plan No. 1', 53 were to be located in the Pacific.¹¹ The development of the atomic bomb hastened construction activities. Nuclear bombers necessitated a proliferation of forward bases. Since the most effective way for the enemy to defend itself against US bombers was to intercept them before they arrived, the US Navy had to assure adequate defence all along their flight plan.

Military Alliances

Overseas bases necessitate overseas alliances. To assure that the US bases would continue to be welcomed in foreign territory, the value of such alliances had to be convincingly portrayed to the host countries. This has been done through economic, political and ideological means. The USA has assured the flow of military and other aid to host countries. It has provided arms and training for friendly regimes to enable them to defeat, or at least contain, insurgencies. For military reasons, the stability of friendly regimes has become more important than political ideals of justice or democracy for the host countries' populations.

At the same time, the perceived Soviet threat to host territories had to be continually emphasized in a credible way. US military bases were portrayed as providing the assurance of freedom from aggression. This was the basis of a network of alliances worked out by the US Pacific Command in the postwar era. Alliances were usually concluded bilaterally, but under US control.

The first and most important of these was the Mutual Security Treaty with Japan in 1951, formally revised in 1960, informally in 1978. ANZUS, with Australia and New Zealand, was signed in 1952, as was the Mutual Defense Treaty with the Philippines. After the Korean war, in 1954, a Mutual Defense Treaty was signed with the Republic of Korea (South Korea). Even an agreement with Pakistan in 1959 forms part of the Pacific alliance structure. The Manila Pact, a multinational agreement, came in 1955. It includes the USA, UK, France, Australia, Thailand, the Philippines and New Zealand. Also known as the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, this pact is technically still in force, though no longer operational.

Western allies support the system in other ways. Canada has a joint defence board with the USA for the north central and east Pacific. The UK facilitates US occupation of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean¹² and France permits US access to its facilities in the South Pacific. In addition to formal treaties, informal military relationships have been established with many Pacific island nations. Fiji has received American arms since 1976, and in 1985 began a formal military aid programme. Since 1979, China has entered a relationship with the USA which, although it is not formally military, nevertheless has military implications. It led, for example, to the termination of the US 1954 Mutual Defence Treaty with Taiwan.

The Pacific alliance system rewards participants with aid, trad , training, and the delivery of arms. It requires from

them acquiescence or participation in military or strategic matters. This may take passive or active forms, from permitting the USA to handle their strategic security, or granting free access by US war ships to their ports, or allowing US bases on their territories, through to participation in joint military exercises.

Military exercises

American global military strategy depends on the concept of collective security. The USA will protect client states, but these allies must make maximum efforts to help in their defence. War readiness requires a single command: that of the USA.

The Pacific has become a grand staging ground for war games. The US Navy today engages its forces in proportionately more active sea time (ie. more time spent at sea per ship) than it did during World War II. Almost 100 military exercises take place in the Pacific in any given year. For example, in 1984 there were 63 exercises in Korea, Japan and Southeast Asia, and eight in Australia and New Zealand, as well as 18 in the mid- and east Pacific.¹³ Military exercises intimidate enemies and remind allies of the USA's supremacy. They cover every aspect of war-fighting, from counter-insurgency to nuclear war. They provide the means to test new weapons systems and strategies in realistic situations.

The greatest of all annual exercises, called *Team Spirit*, involves more than 200,000 soldiers. Ostensibly aimed to protect Korea, *Team Spirit* taunts the USSR close to its most sensitive and vulnerable port, Vladivostok. In the 1984 exercise, a US aircraft carrier accidentally collided with a Soviet attack submarine. The *Rim-of-the-Pacific* exercise (RIMPAC) uses ships, submarines and aircraft, and involves Canada, Australia, New Zealand (until the ANZUS rift in 1985) and, since 1980, Japan. Other exercises go by a creative array of names, such as *Welcome Guest*, *Forward Thrust*, *Valiant Blitz*, *Tangent Flash*, *Cope Thunder*, *Jungle Drum*, *Thermal Gale* and *Beach Crest*.

Exercises can be timed to interfere with or try to influence internal political processes of allied countries, particularly during elections. For example, in 1984, exercises with New Zealand were designed to strengthen the hand of the National Party. The arrival of US warships was intended to sway a largely pro-American electorate away from the Labour Party's anti-nuclear stance. As became apparent, this policy completely backfired.¹⁴

One exercise in which allies are not permitted to participate is the *Global Shield*, conducted by the Strategic Air Command. It simulates a global crisis escalating to nuclear war. Involved are a mock attack on the USSR and the firing of missiles, for example the Minutemen, over the Pacific Missile Range, and possibly also, test firings of the Trident missile from nuclear submarines.

Nuclear testing

When the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the world entered a fundamentally new era in the conduct of international relations. Although nuclear weapons have never again been used in actual combat situations, the threat of their use has become a constant factor in political relations, scientific research and development, economic calculations and planning, and has overshadowed individuals

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and communities. Nuclear weapons have become more than weapons of mass destruction. The mere possession of them is a powerful argument which can be used in diplomacy of every type. As soon as the first bombs were used, the nuclear arms race had begun, and it has not yet diminished despite Soviet-American detente and the formal end of the Cold War in 1990. A number of states are reputed to have the capacity to develop nuclear weapons.

To develop ever more sophisticated nuclear weapons and delivery systems, tests were imperative. After the Los Alamos tests in Nevada on the US mainland, the realization dawned that testing at home was perceived as too dangerous and would soon lead to opposition within the country. It was the US Navy which demonstrated that there were alternative sites outside the USA. In 1945 a nuclear race began within the American armed forces. Since the atom bomb was a weapon 'belonging' to the US Air Force, the Navy's admirals sought a specific nuclear role of their own. In 1946, they staged *Operation Crossroads*, an atomic attack on a fleet of abandoned ships at the Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands. The exercise was intended to prove that the Navy could withstand such an attack and remain operational. Both France and the UK felt it necessary to become part of the 'nuclear club' in the late 1950s. Both ended up choosing the Pacific as their testing ground. After losing their Sahara test sites after the Algerian independence in 1962, France switched to the Pacific. Extensive UK testing took place in the Pacific and Australia between 1956 and 1963.

The Pacific islands proved fruitful for these purposes. After the first crude explosives came smaller, more sophisticated bombs. These were later integrated into long- and short-range nuclear missiles, cruise missiles and nuclear submarines. All these were tested over, in and under the 'empty' Pacific Ocean, including the largest and 'dirtiest' ever to be detonated, the 1954 Bravo hydrogen bomb. Even the 'peaceful' uses of nuclear energy found in the Pacific a resting place for their deadly waste products. The Pacific Ocean, it seems, was destined to become a 'Nuclear Lake'.

The scourge of military and nuclear testing

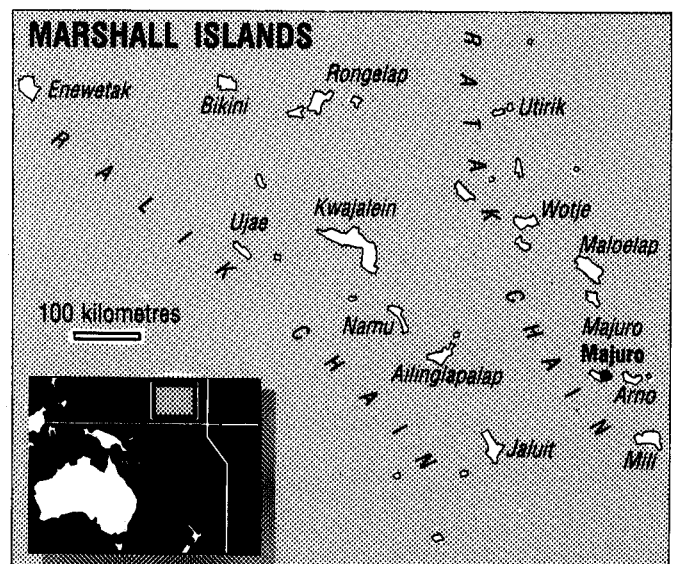
The large expanses and low populations of the Pacific are perceived to make it ideal for two types of military testing: long-range weapons delivery systems and arms too dangerous to use near populated areas, such as nuclear and chemical weapons.

Five nations have been involved in testing nuclear weapons in the Pacific.

The **United Kingdom** exploded 25 nuclear devices on Christmas Island (now part of Kiribati) between 1956 and 1958. In cooperation with Australia, the UK also tested 12 devices on the island of Monte Bello, on the Australian coast, and in the desert near Emu and Maralinga, between 1952 and 1963. The UK and Australia also cooperated in a series of 13,000 missile tests at Woomera, Australia, between 1944 and 1960. The largest and most expensive of these was the Blue Streak rocket, which was to become the UK's major ballistic delivery system, housed in a network of underground silos and able to reach the USSR heartland from the UK within 20 minutes. All components, including fully operational silos, were tested at Woomera from 1954 onward.¹⁵

The **USA** used the Bikini Atoll (Marshall Islands) for 23 tests from 1946 to 1958, and Enewetak (Marshall Islands) for 43 tests from 1948 to 1958. Before the Soviet-American Atmospheric Test Ban Treaty was ratified in 1963, the USA tested long-range missiles with 12 high-altitude nuclear explosions over Johnston Island between 1958 and 1962, as well as several explosions over Christmas Island in 1962.

From 1959 onwards, the USA concentrated its efforts on testing delivery systems over the Pacific Missile Range from the California coast to Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Kwajalein has probably contributed more to the nuclear arms race than any other site in the world. Accuracy, range and payload are measured by the most sophisticated camera, radar and sonar equipment. At Kwajalein, the USA has tested intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) such as the Minuteman, antiballistic missiles (ABM) like the Nike-Zeus, submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) like the Trident, sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCM) like the Tomahawk, radar defense systems, and anti-satellite weapons. Kwajalein figured prominently in plans for President Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative



(SDI), also dubbed 'Star Wars'. A budget of at least \$US 25 billion was to be spent on research and development for Star Wars between 1984 and 1989. Budget deficits and the realization that the concept was scientifically untenable later dramatically reduced that figure.

Limitations in the range between Vandenburg Air Base and Kwajalein (about 7200 km.) pushed researchers to develop testing procedures that could be used in mid-ocean. Trident and MX missiles have a range of up to 13,000 km. Tests in Broad Ocean Areas (BOA) have already been conducted about 586 km. northwest of Guam and probably near Wake Island, an American possession halfway between Hawaii and Guam. Wake has been considered in recent years as a possible home for the people of the Bikini Atoll who cannot return to their islands for at least another 50 years because of residual radiation. Chatham and Oeno Islands have also been named as potential BOA splashdown sites. Oeno belongs to the Pitcairn Island group, a colony of the UK. Chatham Island is part of New Zealand, only 500 km. east of its mainland. In 1984, New Zealand's then Prime Minister, David Lange, declared that agreement for the use of the site would not be given.¹⁶

Although little publicized as yet, BOA tests promise to affect the Pacific island states in ways previous tests have not. Major political and legal implications are involved. BOA testing requires instruments to be placed in relatively shallow water on the ocean floor. This may be in violation of the Seabed Treaty, which prohibits placing weapons of mass destruction on the ocean floor or using the seabed for any 'facilities specifically designed for storing, testing, or using such weapons.'¹⁷ In 1985 there was an outcry in Australia when it was revealed that Sydney was being considered as a possible staging area for MX tests in the Tasman Sea between Australia and New Zealand.

France began its nuclear test programme with four atmospheric and underground tests in the Sahara Desert during the 1950s and early 1960s. After the loss of its colonial control over Algeria in 1962, France found the island of Moruroa in French Polynesia most suitable to continue its nuclear tests. Atmospheric tests were begun three years after ratification of a test ban treaty of which France refused to be part, arguing that it would 'hamper French independence'.

After 44 explosions above the ground, France finally bowed to international pressures (including charges brought to the World Court by Australia and New Zealand) and continued its tests below the sea. Although exact figures are never released, there have been more than 115 tests since France agreed to go underground in 1975. In 1990 explosions took place in July, with 30 and 3 kiloton devices tested, and again in November. These were most likely components of tactical air to surface missiles, smaller short-range weapons ideal for use in battlefield situations.

France is the only power to continue nuclear testing in the Pacific. Though supposedly independent of NATO and US control, a recent article in the US journal *Foreign Affairs*¹⁸ documents the fact that since 1973, French tests have been secretly supported by Washington with data and technology transfers.

In 1980 China tested two intercontinental ballistic missiles over the Pacific. The USSR has also tested missiles with splashdowns in the Pacific Ocean. Neither has detonated nuclear weapons in the region. President Mikhail Gorbachev

has launched a peace initiative with regard to the Pacific, first with a speech in Vladivostok in 1986 and again with a more detailed 'Seven Point Peace Plan' in September 1988. He underlined that the USSR's interests in the region are economic rather than military.

Rationale for tests

The overriding rationale for all weapons testing has been provided by the Cold War. The USA, conscious of its 'manifest destiny' to act as the world's guardian, 'making the world safe for democracy', assumed for itself the right to develop a nuclear umbrella which would shield the 'free' world from Soviet aggression and expansionism.

The Pacific was never given a choice as to whether its peoples agreed with this assessment, nor as to whether the Pacific Islands could be used as a testing ground simply on the basis of their status as micro-populations, ie. as minorities in relation to the majorities being 'protected'. The generosity of Pacific peoples who initially welcomed this role was later tempered by disappointment and opposition as experience and information educated them to the realities of their position.

When the military governor of the Marshall Islands first explained to Bikinians in 1946 that removal of the population would contribute to the ending of all wars on earth, the paramount chief Juda agreed to make this sacrifice with the following words:

*If the US government and the scientists of the world want to use our island and atoll for furthering development, which with God's blessing will result in kindness and benefit to all mankind, my people will be pleased to go elsewhere.'*¹⁹

Although initially convinced they would be absent for only a short time, the Bikinians' imposed exile continues more than 40 years later. And the rationale continues to be the same: world peace and the Soviet threat.

In fact, Soviet presence in the Pacific has been minimal. The USSR has few forward bases. The addition of Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam as a base for Soviet ships and the deployment of Delta III-class submarines has increased the strategic importance of the Soviet Pacific Fleet, but even American and Japanese analysts admit that the Soviet Union's arsenal is arrayed primarily for defensive purposes, with most of the hardware aimed against China.²⁰ Most submarines are stationed in Vladivostok and Petropavlovsk. Vladivostok lies behind several choking points (narrow straits which can militarily be made impossible for vessels of any type) easily closed by the USA. Petropavlovsk is far from the Soviet heartland and cannot be easily re-supplied in case of war.

A second reason for the massive presence of military in the region and the necessity of ever more sophisticated weaponry is the US claim that lines of communication from the USA to Asia and to the Indian Ocean must be safeguarded in the northern Pacific, and access to Australia and New Zealand in the southern Pacific. Here too, however, a military challenge by the Soviet Union is remote at best. In recent years the Soviet Pacific fleet has not travelled south of the Equator, and its own sea lanes are extremely insecure. The Soviet far east is more dependent on maritime supply and more vulnerable to disruptions than either coast of the USA.

The Soviet cargo fleet must transport 80-90% of supplies

needed in its far eastern territories from its industrial western regions. This involves passing through a 15,000 km. journey by sea, including transit through the Suez Canal, which could easily be interrupted in case of a war. The prime mission of Soviet naval squadrons in the Indian and Pacific Oceans is the protection of this shipping route. A more belligerent purpose would be self-defeating and would result in the sure disruption and possible destruction of this vital lifeline.

France and the USA have used another argument for the retention of military control over Pacific island nations. 'Strategic denial' has the purpose of preventing the USSR from wooing Pacific nations into the Soviet sphere of influence. Yet the evidence indicates that the USSR pursues only economic goals in the Pacific arena. In practice, Soviet relationships to South Pacific nations have been open and legal. The only two countries hosting Soviet embassies are Australia and New Zealand. After deciding not to have relations with either superpower, the Vanuatu government in 1986 tried to establish diplomatic ties with both. It was persuaded to back down on inviting an embassy of the USSR. PNG is presently negotiating the opening of a Soviet diplomatic mission.

Soviet fishing boats operate under licence in New Zealand and did so for a short time in Vanuatu and Kiribati. Kiribati's 1985 fishing agreement with the USSR was a response to increasing impatience with the arrogance and paternalism displayed by the metropolitan powers of USA, Australia and New Zealand, and Kiribati's wish to gain economic independence from British subsidies. The \$US 1.5 million paid by the USSR for one year represented 10% of Kiribati's national budget. There were considerable alarmist reactions to the deal, both internally and externally, and the agreement expired after one year because the contracting parties could not agree on new prices. In 1987, Vanuatu reached an agreement for Soviet fishing access, which included port rights and landing rights for their fishing crews. The US Defence Department became nervous about these contracts and outlined possible motives for Soviet initiatives, including surveillance of US military activities, enhancement of Soviet communications and satellite operations, and so forth.

From time to time, incidents are reported in the Pacific area press about sightings of Soviet submarines or the activities of Libyan agents in the area. These incidents usually coincide with local elections and are never substantiated under closer scrutiny.²¹ At the time of the 1987 Fiji elections, the Australian *Penthouse* magazine published an 'expose' on Libyan activities in the Pacific while US Ambassador to the UN, Vernon Walters, on a visit to Vanuatu, discovered two Libyan 'agents' in his hotel. The only proven connection of Libya to the Pacific is that one of the independence factions of Kanaky sent groups of Kanak students to Libya (later also to North Korea) for training.

What then are the real reasons for such a massive militarization of the Pacific Ocean? The first and foremost must surely be economic. The ocean resources are only now beginning to be exploited. They will gain dramatically in importance as continental resources are depleted. In addition to the mineral resources already exploited on the islands themselves, such as bauxite, copper, nickel, gold and chromite, ocean-floor mining promises an abundance of petroleum, manganese crusts, and nodules with nickel, copper, cobalt components, phosphate, phosphorites and sulphides.²² Distant water fishing fleets in 1984 took \$US

660 million worth of tuna alone out of the Pacific.²³ Total pelagic resources are greater here than anywhere else on the planet.

With control of the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) around its Pacific colonies, France is able to increase its EEZ from 32,200 square miles to some 2.86 million square miles,²⁴ the second largest in the world. This is the reason France keeps Foreign Legion garrisons even on Matthew and Hunter Islands, tiny, bare rocks in the ocean between Kanaky and Vanuatu, also claimed as Vanuatu territory.

But marine space itself, apart from the mineral and pelagic resources it contains, is a valuable resource. This constitutes the second reason for the militarization of the Pacific. The total US trade volume crossing the Pacific Ocean each year is in excess of \$US 300 billion, 50% more than that which crosses the Atlantic.²⁵ The lengthy dispute within the UN over formulation of a Convention on the Law of the Sea shows how controversial is access to this resource. When it was finally completed in 1962, Fiji was the first state to sign it. The USA, on the other hand, declared its refusal to sign because it may cause navigational difficulties for vessels flying the US flag, particularly warships. This in spite of the fact that the treaty allows for innocent passage in territorial waters, the right of passage through straits used for international navigation and through archipelagic sea lanes. It even guarantees the right for submarines to pass through straits over which countries may claim sovereignty. Since it enters into force only when 60 countries have ratified, the Convention, now numbering 34 ratifications, is not yet part of international law.

Thirdly, the USA, the USSR and France are the only remaining global sea powers. And of these, only the USA and France maintain a genuinely globe-encircling network of naval military bases and communications facilities. Among operational capabilities sought by the US armed forces, 'unencumbered access to the lines of communication' still figures prominently in scenarios reaching into the 21st Century. A US Defence Department paper on a strategic framework for the Asia/Pacific Rim states: 'We must retain our flexibility to move our forces at a moment's notice and operate without restriction on the open seas and international waterways.'²⁶

Control over the open seas will be crucial in the geopolitical power plays of the future. Military power is increasingly dependent on highly sophisticated communications technology and access to ideal sites for transmission and reception of satellite signals. Placement, maintenance and protection of strategic communications requires the ability to project force globally. Satellite technology has increasingly diverse uses, not only for communication, but for intelligence gathering of a military and economic nature. Resources, both on land and sea, but also under the earth's surface and the seabed, can be discovered through satellite technology. This has led to a high level of sensitivity. In 1976, eight equatorial countries claimed segments of the orbit directly above them as integral parts of their national territory. If the 200-mile EEZ were added to this, it could cause tremendous problems for countries with satellite capacities, including the USA, USSR, France, the UK and numerous others.

These factors have given a new meaning to the concept of 'strategic denial'. No longer is it simply a case of denying the enemy's military access to certain geographic areas. It now encompasses the denial of access to economic resources. If national economic interests were sufficiently threatened, such

denial could equally well be implemented against economic rivals. To a certain extent, if there had not already been a perceived Soviet threat, it would have had to be invented in order to release the astronomical sums of money needed for the purpose of global power projection. With glasnost, perestroika and the East European revolutions of the end of 1989 and beginning of 1990, the idea of a Soviet threat must be re-evaluated. It is already clear, however, that neither the USA nor France have any intention of altering their posture in the Pacific region.

The USSR has proposed a plethora of naval arms reduction proposals. These include the banning of naval activity in international straits and shipping lanes, parallel dismantling of the Soviet naval facility at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam and the US Naval Base at Subic Bay in the Philippines, decommissioning of 100 Soviet submarines in exchange for removal of five to seven US aircraft carriers from service, etc.²⁷ Coupled with these proposals has been a radical unilateral reduction of Soviet naval activity. Yet the USA refuses even to enter into negotiations about naval force reductions in the Pacific. The argument is that to achieve a naval balance in the Pacific region, a greater reduction would be required of the USA than of the USSR. This represents a tacit admission that the USA has always had the upper hand in the Asia/Pacific region, despite decades of arguments about the Soviet threat.

Recent rationales for the immense military presence of the USA in the region have begun to shift emphasis away from the USSR. Most recently it has been argued that disappearance of the Soviet threat will not change the US military posture in the region. Under-Secretary of Defense for Policy, Paul Wolfowitz, in a statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee on 19 April 1990 argued as follows:

*'In the changing global and regional environment of the 1990s, we expect the risk of military confrontation between the Superpowers to diminish. As it does, another aspect of our military presence in the region - the role of regional balancer, honest broker, and ultimate security guarantor - will assume greater relative importance. Over the next decade, our presence will continue to be the region's irreplaceable balancing wheel.'*²⁸

Military secrecy

Security and secrecy are intimately related from the military point of view. Accurate assessment of military strength, sophistication, strategy and deployment must be denied to hostile powers. For the sake of a credible deterrent, the enemy must be convinced of the military superiority of the adversary. At the same time, the enemy must be prevented from determining the precise capability and deployment of allied forces, or from gaining access to their technology.

Information is power. Denial of access to information is one way of maintaining superiority and in military terms, this is an unchallenged truism. Elaborate spy networks are created and maintained at increasing expense, using some of the most sophisticated technology, including satellites, for the purpose of guarding one's own secrets and ferreting out those of the enemy. The USA's intelligence system for the Pacific, the Intelligence Center Pacific (IPAC), is based in Hawaii, under the command of the Pacific Command. It draws on all types of intelligence, in and out of the Pacific, and maintains complex profiles and files in order to assess each country's military, political and economic affairs.²⁹

Problems related to military secrecy appear primarily in the politico-civilian realm. In a democratic system, civilian authorities may be able to monitor military activities internally. Foreign operations present special problems. Secrecy can act as a cover for a variety of unpopular or even illicit activities. This is nowhere more apparent than in the controversy over nuclear testing in the Pacific. When the USA exploded the 'Bravo' megabomb (1000 times the explosive force of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima) in 1954, there was no prior warning for the people who became its victims. Similarly, the French military has consistently refused to give prior notification or to allow all but cursory independent research on the effects of its testing programme on Moruroa Atoll. It should, however, be acknowledged that despite concerted efforts of the US to maintain military secrecy, actions of the US Congress and the passing of laws such as the Freedom of Information Act have made it easier for researchers to extract at least historical information from the USA than similar data from France, the UK or the USSR.

Secrecy can also enhance the credibility of disinformation campaigns. The powers which possess information can release correct information selectively, interpreting it in such a way as to further their purposes. Misleading information can be fabricated without the possibility of correction by independent sources. This has been the method of 'scare campaigns' such as the unverifiable Soviet submarine sightings off the Cook Islands in 1986 or, in 1987, the 'discovery' of two Libyan 'agents' by US Ambassador, General Vernon Walters, during a one-night stay in the Vanuatu's Intercontinental Island Inn.

Another aspect of secrecy which has made international headlines is the USA's policy 'not to confirm or deny' the presence of nuclear weapons on ships making port calls in allied countries. On annual training cruises, Pacific Fleet warships regularly make port visits. The first aim of such visits is politico-diplomatic, not strictly military. According to the Pacific Command, port visits 'protect US interests and support US policies in foreign countries.' They also provide 'rest and recreation' to sailors. As many as 10,000 sailors can suddenly swamp a port city for two to five days, creating a variety of social problems. The biggest protest, however, has come from anti-nuclear activists, who cite danger to civilians as the chief reason for objecting to port facilities being accorded to nuclear-powered vessels and vessels carrying nuclear explosives. Major protests have erupted in Japan, Australia, Fiji, Hawaii and San Francisco. Port cities and national authorities in these countries, as well as New Zealand, Vanuatu, Belau, Mauritius and the Seychelles have from time to time found the risks unacceptable.

The American military authorities refuse to divulge whether or not particular visits involve nuclear materials. This, it is claimed, would give the enemy information detrimental to American security, since it could serve to make targets of the vessels. The corollary, of course, is that if the enemy does not know which ships are nuclear, all ports harbouring American ships become targets. In addition, there have been numerous nuclear accidents, and the possibility of a major Chernobyl-style disaster cannot be ruled out.

The 1984 elections in New Zealand brought the Labour Party under David Lange to power on an anti-nuclear ticket. This was in response to grass roots response of 70-80% of the population who expressed support for a non-nuclear policy. After its re-election in 1987, the Lange government enacted legislation making New Zealand a nuclear-free state.

REMOVAL OF PEOPLES

In February 1985, New Zealand denied a requested visit by the *USS Buchanan*, a known nuclear-capable ship. This caused the USA to charge that the action violated the ANZUS treaty. Negotiations proved fruitless, and the USA declared inoperative its treaty obligations to New Zealand. Among other things, this meant the withdrawal of routine intelligence sharing with New Zealand, exacerbating even further the intelligence gap created by military secrecy.

The interrelationship of intelligence operations among like-minded allies can take many forms, as the anti-nuclear movement was to discover through other events in 1985. On 30 June 1985, Belau's President and author of its anti-nuclear constitution, Haruo Remeliik, was assassinated. Lengthy investigations by the local police and FBI agents proved fruitless. Ten days later, on 10 July 1985, the Greenpeace flagship *Rainbow Warrior* was bombed in a New Zealand harbour by French DGSE (the French external secret service) agents. The ship had come from a mission to evacuate endangered Rongelap Islanders, victims of US nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands. It was to head a fleet of ships to protest French tests in Moruroa some weeks later.

Whether these events are related operationally might never be known. Conspiracy theories abound. What is clear is that they are based on identical concern for an erosion of military supremacy in political affairs in the Pacific through the nuclear-free Pacific movement, and that intelligence services, separately or in collusion, will go to any length to safeguard this supremacy. French nuclear efforts in the Pacific have been covertly supported by Washington since 1973 through data and technology transfers.³⁰ As early as 1982, US Ambassador to Fiji, William Bodde, sounded a warning:

*'The most potentially disruptive development for US relations with the South Pacific is the growing anti-nuclear movement in the region... The US government must do everything possible to counter this movement.'*³¹

But even these extreme effects of military secrecy could not prevent the signing of the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty in Rarotonga on the 40th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, 6 August 1985.

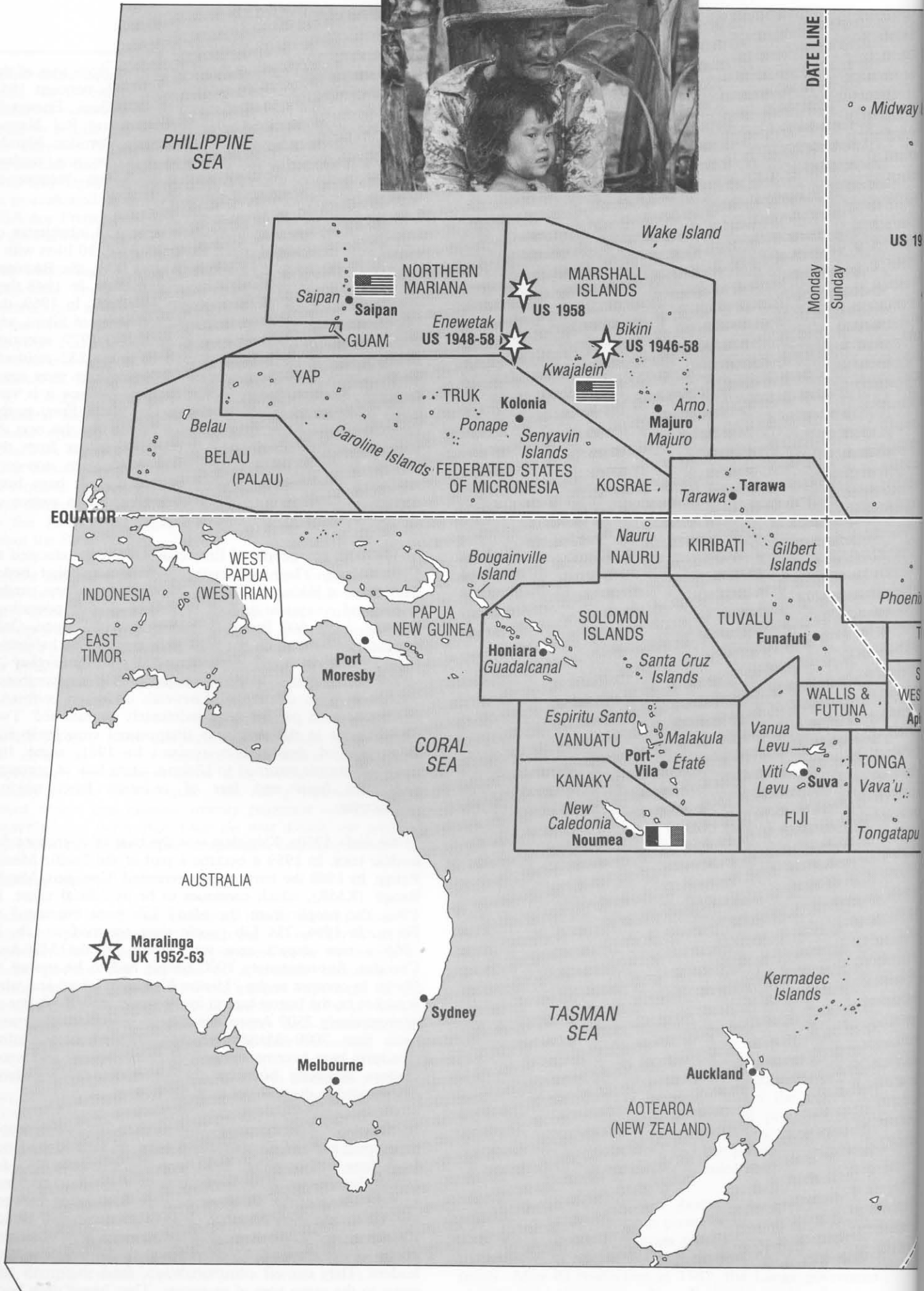
Entire populations have had to be removed from sites of the 66 US nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands between 1946 and 1958. This includes islanders of Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap and Wotho Atolls, Kwajalein and Roi Namur Islands, Lib Island and the Mid-Atoll Corridor Islands. Inhabitants of Bikini and Enewetak have become 'nuclear nomads', unable to return to their homes because of unacceptably high levels of radiation.

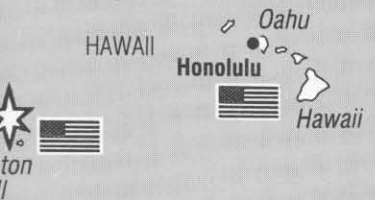
In 1946, with less than a month's notice, all inhabitants of Bikini were transported to the Rongerik Atoll, 10 islets with a quarter of the surface of Bikini. A year later, the Bikinians were found to be suffering from malnutrition. In 1948 they were moved to Kili in the southern Marshalls. In 1969, the USA conducted a limited radiological cleanup of Bikini, and three Bikinian families returned in 1972. By 1977, scientists recorded an eleven-fold radiation level in the 130 residents on the island, and a year later all 139 inhabitants were again removed. Further cleanup is not foreseen because it is very costly and limited in effectiveness. The island Eneu in the Bikini Atoll has been pronounced off-limits for the next 20 years. Rongelap people were victims of fallout from the 'Bravo' blast in 1954. They have inadequate non-contaminated food source. Several of their islands have been declared off-limits. Birth defects have become a source of anxiety.

In 1947 the 142 people of Enewetak Atoll were relocated to Ujilang Atoll. Their circumstances were somewhat better than those of Bikinians, because their new home was similar in size and ecosystem to their old. After cleanup operations in 1980, some 500 Enewetak people returned home. Only the southern sector of the atoll was certified as habitable. Enjebi to the north will remain uninhabitable for another 20 years, while Runit island, containing the contaminated substances from cleanup of Enewetak under an enormous concrete-domed pit, has been indefinitely quarantined. Two other islands in the atoll have disappeared completely and only parts of three others remain. In 1981, some 100 Enewetak people returned to Ujelang, citing lack of coconuts and fresh fruits and fear of radiation from residual radioactivity.

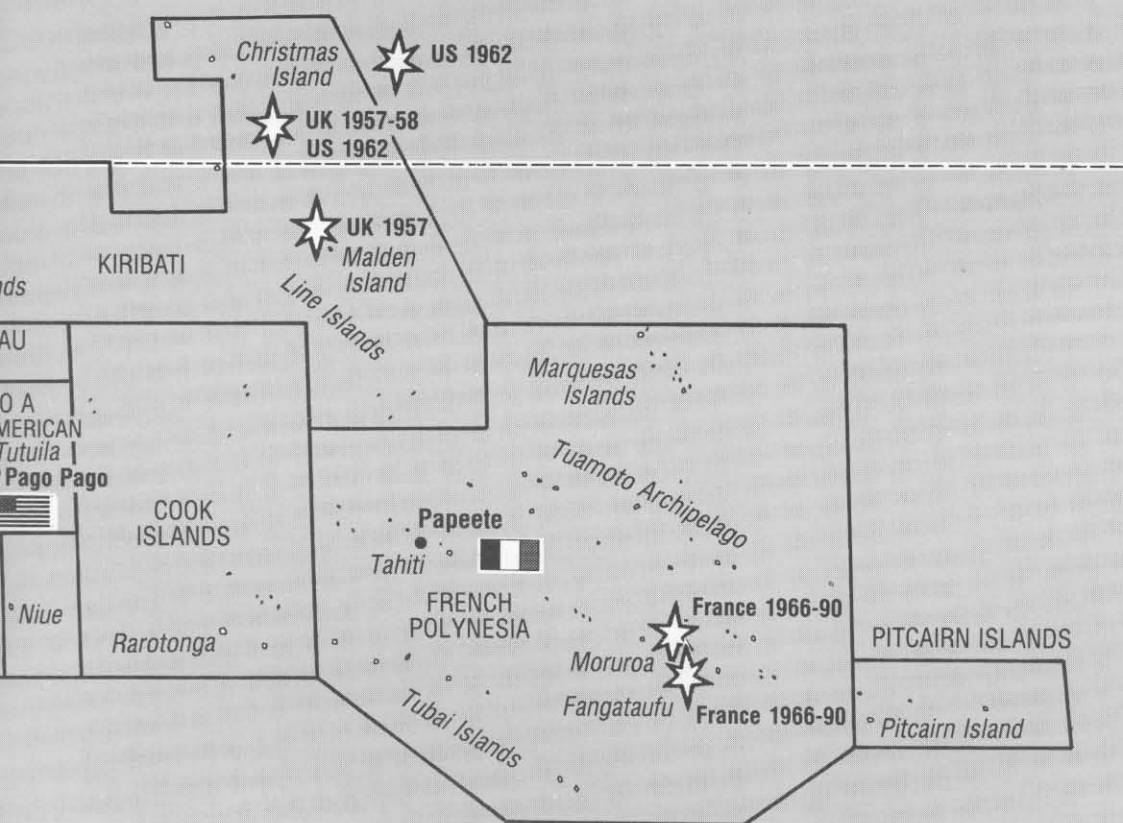
In the early 1950s, Kwajalein was the base of operations for nuclear tests. In 1959 it became a part of the Pacific Missile Range. In 1968 the territory was renamed 'Kwajalein Missile Range' (KMR), which continues to be its official name. In 1961, the people from the island Lib were evacuated to Ebeye. In 1966, 234 Lib people were returned to Lib. In 1964 a new impact area was chosen in the Mid-Atoll Corridor. Approximately 1000 people had to be moved to Ebeye. In contrast to the 735-acre Kwajalein Island and what is said to be the largest lagoon in the world, now the home of approximately 2500 Americans, Ebeye Island, which houses more than 7000 Marshallese, has only 67 acres. Infrastructures have become strained. Housing, sewage and water systems originally built by the American military, have deteriorated to the point of slum habitation.

In 'Operation Homecoming', about 1000 Kwajalein people reoccupied parts of Kwajalein and other mid-corridor islands from June to November 1982, preventing missile tests for almost five months. This largest ever protest was in response to the signing of the Compact of Free Association between the USA and the Marshall Islands Government, which Kwajalein landowners considered discriminatory. The army at the outset arrested 13 elected and traditional Kwajalein leaders. They cut off communication, food shipments and water to the camp sites of protesters. They began daily body





NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN



SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN

Nuclear test site	
Military base	
USA	
FRANCE	
1000 miles at the Equator	

searches of Marshallese KMR employees and prevented them from using facilities such as the only bank on the atoll. They even erected barbed wire, search lights and a fenced-in checkpoint. Still, the protesters succeeded in renegotiating the Compact for more favourable, though still unsatisfactory terms.

In May 1985, Rongelap Islanders once again moved from their homes. A 1978 survey had shown levels of radioactive contamination which were as high or higher than those of Bikini, 22 years after they had been assured by the US that their atoll was safe for habitation. Although the US Congress had promised independent radiological surveys and a \$US 3.2 million grant for resettlement, the Islanders could not accept the attached conditions: strong pressure to approve the Compact of Free Association and to waive the right to bring suits against the USA for health and environmental effects of earlier nuclear testing. The ill-fated *Rainbow Warrior*, on its last mission before being sabotaged by French agents in New Zealand, secured transport for Rongelap Islanders to Mejato Island on the Kwajalein Atoll. Both Kwajalein and Rongelap Islanders overwhelmingly rejected the Compact in a referendum, though there were sufficient votes by other Marshallese to pass it.

Aboriginal Australians were removed from the British test sites in the Maralinga and Emu areas in South Australia, and some of them have been denied the use of their land for more than 30 years because of radioactive fallout.

Removal of people in the French testing area has happened occasionally without advance notice or publicity. In 1968, the entire population (50) of Tureia island near Moruroa was evacuated to Tahiti for a three month 'holiday' without warning. They were returned after a superficial decontamination of the island.

Health effects

The 'Bravo' test of 1954, more than any other detonation since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, has become a laboratory for medical scientists researching the effects of radioactive fallout on human health. Documentation obtained in 1982 under the Freedom of Information Act in the USA confirmed that the test had proceeded with full knowledge that the wind patterns would lead to contamination of populated islands. 'The midnight briefing indicated less favourable winds at 10,000 to 25,000 foot levels. Winds at 20,000 feet were headed for Rongelap to the east.'³² This has led to suspicions that the islanders were being used as research subjects.

Radioactive ash showered on Rongelap a full five centimetres deep, settling in tanks and wells, turning drinking water a blackish-yellow. Immediate effects were burns and agonizing itching. Later in the day came nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. On the second day, even strong men became lethargic, as most people were confined to their beds. On the third day, the whole population was suddenly evacuated by a US naval destroyer. Permitted to take along only the clothes they were wearing, islanders were warned that an early death awaited them if they remained even one day longer.

Medical problems of major proportions have appeared since then. In 1958, the rate of stillbirths and miscarriages among Rongelap women rose to more than twice the rate of unexposed Marshallese women. Four years following the exposure, miscarriages and deformed births doubled. The phenomenon of 'jellyfish babies', born without faces and bones, added a macabre note to the traumatized victims,

though medical science has not been able to prove their relationship to the earlier radiation exposure. In 1963 the first thyroid tumour appeared, and these have increased from year to year. By 1985, 77% of all Rongelapese who were under 10 years old at the time of the test developed tumours requiring surgery. Other cancers such as leukemia and gastric carcinoma have also been attributed to radiation exposure.

The end of the suffering is not yet in sight. Growth retardation among young children, premature aging among the old, an incidence of physical and mental deformity, have all been increasing over the years. Brookhaven National Laboratories, under contract from the US Department of Energy (DOE) to monitor the late effects of radiation on Marshallese people, discovered that more than half of Rongelap Islanders were suffering from a rare form of 'double breakage' chromosome damage, believed to be caused by radiation.³³

Utirik people, whose islands received less fallout, were given only cursory attention, with medical visits every three years. In 1976, however, cases of cancer and thyroid disease multiplied to a rate equal to that of the Rongelap population. The Utirik people charge that their compensation payments are insufficient in relation to their needs.

Secrecy surrounds nuclear test-related medical data gathered in French Polynesia. Official information on the causes of cancer deaths became unavailable in Tahiti since 1963, three years prior to the first test. Papeete's two hospitals are run by military doctors, and most cancer cases are sent to France. Large groups of patients - 50 on one flight alone - have been transported to France by military aircraft. Reports reaching the press indicate that the majority of patients are under 35 years old and suffer from brain tumours related to test exposures when they were from 10 to 20 years old. On islands close to Moruroa, an abnormally high incidence of ulcers, miscarriages and stomach troubles have been reported. The lack of independent data makes it extremely difficult to document or prove the link between nuclear tests and health problems on the islands. Tahitians and Cook Islanders who have sought medical attention in New Zealand have shown a steadily increasing incidence of cancers, but no cases of leukemia.³⁴

Veterans of British nuclear tests in Australia and on Christmas Island began demanding compensation for radiation-induced illnesses in the early 1980s. They found that their medical records had been classified secret, even though in some cases the 30-year rule time limit had passed. When the British government released some of the information in late 1985, it was discovered that the government had set up a secret panel to monitor the effects of radiation on servicemen involved in the tests, but never made the results available to those concerned.

In 1985 a Royal Commission in British Nuclear Tests in Australia found that the nuclear tests constituted a health threat to Aborigines living in remote areas near the test sites and to white inhabitants of several outback towns which had received high doses of fallout. The Commission recommended compensation to those affected, though it deplored the insufficiency of the data collected at the time: 'There is now little prospect of carrying out any worthwhile epidemiological study of those involved in the tests nor of others who might have been directly affected by them.'³⁵

The problem for all those concerned about the health of Pacific island victims of radioactive exposure is the lack of independently verified data. As a World Council of Churches delegation to the Marshall Islands reported in 1983:

*'The inadequacy of nationwide comparative health surveys makes it difficult to assess the broad effect of the nuclear testing programme on the people. It is indeed difficult scientifically to link the nuclear testing programme with health effects in the so-called "non-exposed" areas. This is due in part to the lack of careful monitoring of health over the entire Marshalls. In our opinion, the Northern Marshalls Radiological Survey, while done with a high level of competence and at great cost, is presented in such a way as to downplay the seriousness of the radiation problem.'*³⁶

An additional health risk has become apparent, related to the microwave radiation emitted by missile tracking radars. They have increased the incidence of cataracts and other eye diseases, causing impaired vision, and in some cases, blindness.

A social by-product of forced removals has been intense crowding in the Marshalls. Ebeye, the most densely populated island in the entire Pacific, has been described as a 'biological time bomb'. Health and sanitation problems have caused several epidemic outbreaks. A polio epidemic in 1963 left more than 190 people paralyzed. From 1967 to 1969 a gastroenteritis epidemic was caused by unsanitary open catchment water tanks.³⁷ More than half of the population is below the age of 15. The total Marshallese population is expected to reach 42,000 by the end of 1990. This represents an almost 25% increase in a decade. Social ills cause further health problems. The suicide rate among young Marshallese males is more than double that of the USA. From 1960 to 1979 there was an eight-fold increase in suicides.³⁸ Recent reports indicate that the suicide rate continued to climb to a high point in 1987, but has begun to decline due to community education and monitoring.³⁹

Environmental effects

If reliable data about health effects of nuclear tests are hard to come by, even greater is the paucity of data on environmental effects. Cleanup efforts have been extremely costly, are restricted to dry land, and have proved to be of limited effectiveness. Cleanups of Bikini and Enewetak have cost hundreds of millions of dollars, yet have not resulted in the satisfactory repopulation of the atolls. The 1985 Royal Commission on British Nuclear Tests in Australia found that the UK's cleanup efforts of the Emu and Maralinga nuclear tests sites in 1967 and 1979 were inadequate and misguided and that Aboriginal Australians should be compensated for the loss of access to traditional lands.

In addition to regular, successful tests, numerous accidents serve to increase environmental risks. A survey of naval accidents across the globe from 1945 to 1988 documents 212 confirmed accidents involving nuclear-powered vessels, 49 involving ballistic missile submarines, 146 involving attack and cruise missile submarines, 13 involving aircraft carriers, and six involving other nuclear-powered surface ships. The survey also reports that there are approximately 48 nuclear warheads and seven nuclear-powered reactors at the bottom of the world's oceans as a result of various accidents.⁴⁰

At the French test site of Moruroa, a bomb detonated in 1979 after it had become lodged in the shaft and tore a hole

in the flank of the fragile basalt atoll, causing an estimated one million cubic metres to break off. A cyclone in March 1981 dislodged concrete and asphalt covering radioactive waste, sweeping as much as 10 to 20 kilograms of plutonium-impregnated tar into the lagoon and the open sea. In a document released in March 1990, France's Ministry of Defence and Atomic Energy Commission claimed that the radioactive waste has now been recovered, treated, and buried in wells 1200 metres deep.

In the early 1980s, two independent investigations spent a total of less than two weeks on the atoll and were limited in their access to test sites. The 1982 Tazief mission was allowed to witness a subkiloton test, one of the smallest ever conducted on the site. The 1983 Atkinson Scientific Mission, with New Zealand, Australian and Papua New Guinean scientists, was allowed only four days, restricted to studying French data as well as rock and coral samples supplied by test site managers. The report, published a year later, though used by France to substantiate its claims of environmental safety, did indicate that more radioactivity was being leached into the sea at a faster rate than admitted by France. It also indicated that during some tests radioactive gases were released into the air and that the lagoon was polluted with radioactive plutonium.

In the same year, three engineers working for the French Atomic Energy Commission released to the press facts indicating that radioactivity levels had doubled from 1980 to 1984, that 30,000 square metres of the north beach was a nuclear rubbish heap, and that the atoll's core sank two centimeters with each blast.⁴¹ An expedition by Jacques Cousteau in 1987 was limited to five days exploring to a depth of only 200 metres. Sampling was restricted and access to waste disposal areas was refused. Cousteau found extensive damage to the coral, threatening a land collapse which would release highly radioactive substances into the waters. He also found highly radioactive substances present in plankton in the lagoon.⁴² Yet France claims that damage from 15 years of underground testing has produced only 0.79 % damage to the atoll's substructure.⁴³

Francois Mitterand pledged a more open policy on nuclear testing during a visit to French Polynesia in May 1990. He promised that the French government would give more information about the type of tests, their size and effects on the environment. It is hoped that this new attitude - if it is implemented effectively - will also improve chances for an international, independent monitoring of environmental effects, though clearly the safest policy for both the region and the planet would be their complete cessation. France's refusal to allow independent monitoring of environmental effects from its tests has caused frictions with Australia and New Zealand, whose self-governing Cook Islands have from time to time been affected by fallout from French atmospheric tests, as have Samoa and Tonga.

The way in which nuclear pollution enters the aquatic food chain is only beginning to be discovered. The extent of food chain contamination may be much larger than is presently suspected. The limited data already available indicates that the great migrations of fish and sea mammals, as well as ocean currents able to carry contaminants throughout the world make the Pacific nuclear threat a global concern. But few scientists are in fact doing the kind of empirical research that is so urgently needed. Military priorities and military secrecy continue to dominate the world's political and scientific agenda.

POLITICAL DESTABILISATION

Pacific island territories which are most militarized are also the ones which have the highest standard of living, the highest wages and the largest gap between rich and poor islanders. Foreign military powers using Pacific islands as bases and test sites have distorted local development, providing lucrative employment to a few at the expense of depressing traditional local production and displacing local culture and lifestyles.

Military considerations often overshadow purely economic benefits. The French territories are a net drain on the French economy. Maintaining its military presence alone costs nearly two billion French francs per year.⁴⁴ The approximately 2000 Polynesians employed by France's testing centre in Moruroa earn between \$A 1875 and \$A 5000 per month, while the average wage in Polynesia as a whole is \$A 1000. Defence and test-related expenditure contributes \$A 460 million a year to Polynesia's heavily dependent economy.⁴⁵ This explains why the independence movement in French Polynesia is confined to a small minority and anti-nuclear protest is limpid.

Micronesian dependency on US subsidies is equally dramatic. The Compact of Free Association agreement stipulates more than \$US 1.4 billion in US assistance over a period of 15 years. In the Marshall Islands, with the dismantling of the Trust Territory, a nuclear compensation fund of \$US 150 million has been turned over to the Marshalls' Government and invested with several large US finance companies.⁴⁶ A disproportionate number of Marshallese have turned from subsistence farming to wage earning, a phenomenon which decreases the self-sufficiency of the islands and increases dependency on outside aid and foreign products. In Belau, 60% of the work force is employed in the civil service, subsidized by a yearly grant of over \$US 10 million. Military allegiances and their benefits to many Pacific politicians serve to divide the different parts of the Pacific. Islands compete with each other for foreign aid. Whenever new thinking prevails and priorities become rearranged in response to people's real needs, fears or aspirations, tremendous pressures are brought upon non-conforming states, both from foreign powers and from within the Pacific itself.

Belau (Palau)

With only 15,000 people and 500 square kms. of land, Belau is the first country in the world to adopt a nuclear-free Constitution. In July 1979, a remarkable 92% of the population voted in favour of provisions which would prohibit the use, testing, storage or disposal in Belauan territory of 'harmful substances such as nuclear, chemical, gas or biological weapons' without the express approval of 75% of the votes in a referendum.

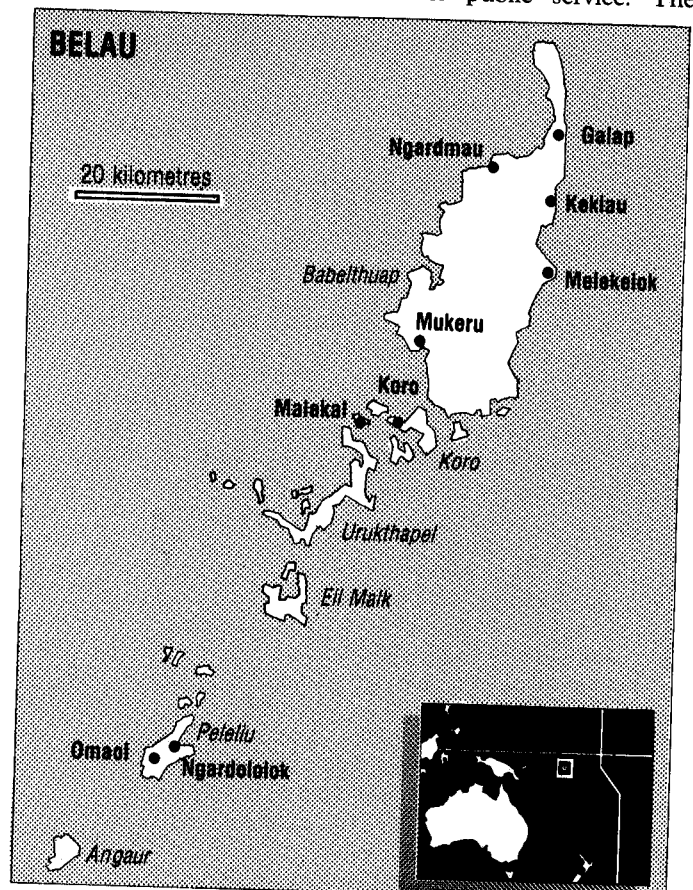
By 1979, the USA had dealt with the Marianas which became a Commonwealth, and was in the process of negotiating a Compact of Free Association with the remainder of its Trust Territories. There was an attempt to create a Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) to include all territories except the Marianas, but this failed, leaving the USA to negotiate, sometimes separately, sometimes collectively, with the governments of the Marshall Islands, the FSM and Belau.

A nuclear-free Constitution for Belau would set a bad precedent for the others, but that was not the only reason for US worries. Belau is also seen as a key fallback for the US

military in case they should lose the US bases at Clark and Subic Bay in the Philippines. Using legal manoeuvres, the USA succeeded in having the constitution refused for certification by the High Commissioner, and a revised draft acceptable to the USA was put before the electorate. It was rejected in October 1979 by 70% of the population. A year later, on 9 July 1980, the original draft Constitution was again overwhelmingly approved (78%) and became the Supreme Law of Belau on 1 January 1981.

In negotiating a Compact of Free Association with Belau, the USA insisted on absolute military authority over Belau and an option to use portions of the islands for military bases, weapons storage facilities and jungle warfare training operations. The US would also be allowed to operate nuclear-powered and nuclear-weapons-capable aircraft and vessels to transit Belauan territory. The US would agree not to store, test or dispose of nuclear weapons in Belau. An aid package totalling more than \$US 1 billion (about \$US 23 million annually for 50 years) would be supplied, together with four payments of \$US 5 million each as military 'impact assistance'. The Compact was signed in August 1982, but needed approval of Belauan voters to go into effect. However, the Constitution and the Compact were in obvious contradiction. Under such circumstances, the Constitution required that the Compact be approved by a 75% majority in order to be able to override the terms of the Constitution. In seven referenda during seven years, the Compact failed to achieve the necessary majority. Belau, therefore, continues as the world's last UN trusteeship under US-administered authority.

The stubborn determination of Belauans to resist intense political and economic pressures has brought with it heavy costs. The economy of the country, based almost entirely on US grants, became precarious. The President at one point threatened to retrench 90% of the public service. The



government defaulted on a \$US 35 million loan for a power station. Other effects included severe social instability, a rise in crime, sabotage, murders and even bombings, a state of what an International Commission of Jurists mission called 'a virtual breakdown of the Rule of Law'.⁴⁷ The US refused to grant necessary increases in subsidies, threatening economic bankruptcy. In 1985, President Haruo Remeliik was assassinated and in 1988 his successor, Lazarus E. Saliu, was found shot dead, apparently self-inflicted.

With only 60% of the votes cast in favour of the Compact, the latest referendum on 6 February 1990 achieved the worst result yet from the US point of view. The stubbornness of Belauans is matched by the inflexibility of the US government in refusing to accept a democratic decision reaffirmed seven times over. The calculation of the US military is that Belauan resistance will diminish as destabilization mounts. That seems to be a serious miscalculation.

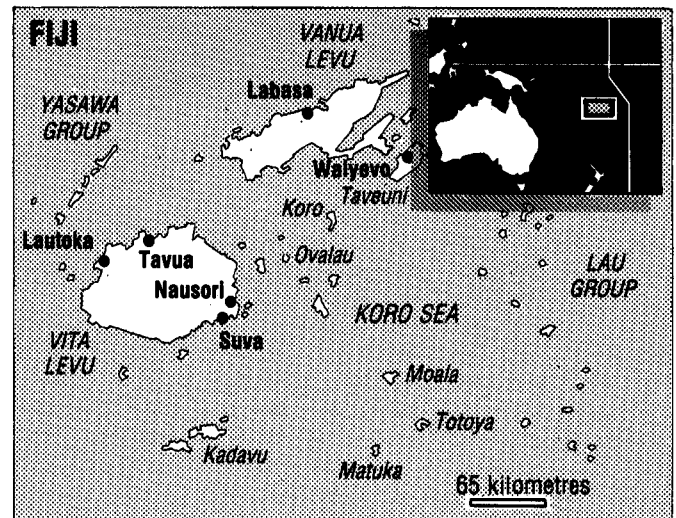
Fiji

Three causes have been cited for the coup d'etat which took place in Fiji on 14 May 1987. Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka, the coup leader, justified it as an act of self-defence on the part of indigenous Fijians against a take over of government by non-Fijian nationals. Rabuka staged a second coup in September 1987, disapproving of a compromise solution which had been worked out by the opposing parties. Again it was the fears of Fijians losing control over their own land which, according to Rabuka, prompted him to act. This race-based interpretation was contested by the ousted President Timoci Bavadra, himself an ethnic Fijian, leader of the Fiji Labour Party, who had formed a coalition with the Indo-Fijian-dominated National Federation Party in order to defeat the ruling Alliance Party. According to the coalition, the elections had been fought on social and economic issues, not on racial grounds. Since independence in 1970, Bavadra claimed, the country had been run to benefit a rich oligarchy, to the detriment of poor Fijians of whatever race.⁴⁸

But for the naval powers USA and France, it was Bavadra's nuclear-free and nonaligned policy which provided the biggest danger, and this is increasingly seen as providing the third cause for the coup. Originally, Fiji had been a leader of anti-nuclear protest in the region. In 1975, Fiji joined New Zealand in co-sponsoring a UN resolution for a South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone (NFZ). It also banned nuclear warships long before New Zealand did. But in 1983, the USA persuaded Fiji President Ratu Mara to drop the ban. In 1985, the USA established a formal military aid programme. It supplied Fiji with three small ships to comprise its navy, and re-supplied its entire army. Fiji has the largest army compared to population among the Pacific island states; half of the army have been active in UN Peacekeeping Forces in Lebanon and in the Multinational Observer Forces in the Sinai.

After the coup, numerous press reports drew attention to circumstantial evidence of a CIA link with the Fiji coup. Although the USA had initially withdrawn development aid (at the same time as Australia and New Zealand), it later gave Rabuka two patrol boats worth \$US 1.85 million. It also offered help in negotiations for Fiji to obtain arms from other countries. At present, Fiji has contracts for arms supplies from Malaysia, South Korea, and both China and Taiwan.

The strangest relationship is with France. In New Caledonia, France condemned the coup, saying that the action of



indigenous Fijians served as a warning for what could happen when indigenous people disregard the will of the majority in their pursuit of power. Since the Kanak people in New Caledonia are also outnumbered by non-indigenous citizens, the comparison was meant to discredit independence-minded Kanak militants. But at the same time, the Chirac administration (according to Fijian press reports denied by France) offered Rabuka 13 million Fiji dollars for a naval base at Uduya Point, west of the capital Suva. In October 1987, two French patrol boats held manoeuvres in Fijian waters with a Fijian patrol boat. In January 1988 a French warship docked in Suva, and Rabuka expressed the wish for close relations with France and French Polynesia. The Rocard government in 1988 supplied Fiji with an \$US 8 million aid package that included 53 Renault trucks and a helicopter. Jane's Defence Weekly has reported that the French government is supplying Fiji with intelligence about regional affairs. In August 1989 Fiji received the first ever visit of a French Prime Minister, who highlighted the strategic significance of Fijian relations for France within South Pacific regional institutions.⁴⁹

In May 1990, Fiji expelled 16 Indian diplomats and closed their Suva embassy, accusing India of waging an international campaign against the Fijian government. In July 1990, Fiji promulgated a new Constitution which fixes Fijian supremacy in government and gives sweeping powers to the Great Council of Chiefs, an institution the opposition accuses of having become an oligarchy. Contrary to all expectations, both Australia and New Zealand encouraged the Fijian opposition to work within the Constitution, thus ending the period of protest against Rabuka's coups.

Fiji's militaristic answer to destabilization, therefore, provides a new and troubling example for the peoples of the Pacific. A major opponent of a nuclear-free Pacific has been created and rewarded with aid, arms and diplomatic legitimacy. In the name of indigenous rights, foreign powers have co-opted a strategic ally and divided the nuclear-free movement.

THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

Independent states

Nine of 25 Pacific island states are fully independent, at least politically. If one looks at the economic picture in the Pacific, a different picture emerges.

With traditional subsistence economies supplanted by money economies through colonial dominance, many independent countries find it difficult to maintain the services they have come to expect, such as education, health care, transportation, communications, etc. Limited resources and the high cost of long-distance transport have made it almost impossible for independent states to maintain an independent economy.

Seven of the nine poorest countries in the Pacific are politically independent. Kiribati, Tuvalu and Western Samoa are on the UN list of Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Those with the most extensive proven mineral deposits (Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) are economically too weak to exploit these resources themselves and have had to depend on external assistance and transnational corporations. Gold, for example, has become PNG's greatest money earner. But because of the enormous capital outlay and technological expertise required, gold mining is owned and operated by foreigners.

Independent countries, moreover, receive substantial assistance from their former colonizers. The fiscal budgets of two independent states indicate an economic base that includes foreign aid as a major source of income. PNG depends on aid from Australia. To an even greater extent, Kiribati depends on British aid. In 1981, with the exception of Western Samoa, all independent countries received their largest single amount of foreign assistance from their last colonial administrators. This dependency is not likely to diminish, since most Pacific island states have little independent income and a high level of government-related employment. In Kiribati and Tuvalu, for example, government jobs are the major single source of wage employment. Reliance on aid donors has an impact on the political process in the Pacific. Donors can increase or decrease the volume of aid to fit political expediency, and

can time the granting or withholding of funds for maximum political impact. Political leaders in independent countries spend a great deal of time travelling internationally, currying favour with donor countries, agencies and corporations.

Only one of the six richest Pacific countries is independent. But Nauru is an anomaly. Its large phosphate deposits are the highest grade in the world, and its population is less than 9000 (only 5000 of whom are Nauruans). Even here, prosperity has a price. Nauru is demanding compensation for rehabilitation of its ecologically devastated island from several countries which share responsibility for the open-face mining carried out since 1900. And Nauru's phosphorus deposits are limited. According to one estimate, they will be exhausted by 1995.

Negative trade balances in the Pacific exacerbate the situation. Apart from PNG and Nauru, all other countries now import five to six times as much as they export, both by value and by bulk. There is an increasing reliance on imported food. This has contributed to some of the highest and most rapidly increasing rates of malnutrition in the world, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The South Pacific's non-reciprocal regional free trade agreement negotiated with Australia and New Zealand (SPARTECA) in 1980 might represent a positive step for Pacific island states. It gives preferential access to goods coming from island states belonging to the South Pacific Forum. The agreement is particularly beneficial to manufacturing states such as Fiji.

Fiji's geographical location has also been useful. As Britain's centre of colonial administration in the Pacific, Fiji acquired the benefits of trade, education and the training of an administrative elite. Later, Fiji became a natural location for regional organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme, Air Pacific and the University of the South Pacific.

Much has been accomplished by island states since independence if one compares progress in education, health or infrastructure. But a horizontal comparison, ie. between independent states and dependent territories, gives a troubling picture. Improvement of services and facilities has been greater in dependent territories. As a result, economically speaking, independence is not a desirable option for most Pacific territories. Given the small populations of most islands, it is relatively easy for foreign powers to purchase allegiance.

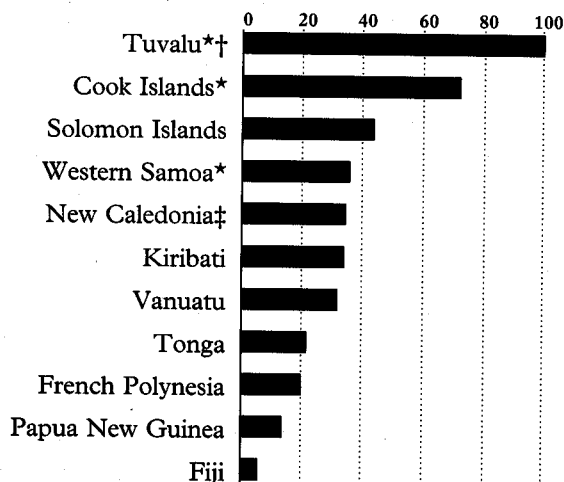
Colonies and dependent territories

None of the above problems are unique to independent countries, a factor which makes some forms of political dependency palatable to many island peoples. Yet, as already noted, the Compacts of Free Association negotiated by the USA with Micronesian Trust Territories have come with enormous price tags. For the fiscal year 1985, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and Belau collected a total of \$US 32.3 million internally for government revenues. This compares with a total of \$US 98.9 million contributed by the USA. In addition, US federal agencies distributed grants totalling \$US 46.07 million in the three territories.⁵⁰ The Northern Mariana Islands, a US Commonwealth, has a different arrangement, though it leads to much the same results.

France subsidizes its Pacific territories by nearly \$US11.5 billion every year. These regions, with their artificially

Table 2 Pacific Dependence

Aid as % of GNP, 1988



Source: OECD, EIU

*Estimated † 1983 ‡ 1987

bloated economies and a communications network which ties them directly to the metropolis, have been almost completely cut off from most regional networks. In French Polynesia this artificiality is even more striking than in New Caledonia. Sixty per cent of the budgeted 4.8 billion francs subsidy went to military expenditures in 1986.⁵¹ Such an economy would not be viable if the French were to withdraw.

There are more than financial benefits to remaining in 'free association' with a colonial power. Population pressures have reached critical proportions in many areas of the Pacific. Migration has become a way of life for many people. The search for employment has emptied some of the smaller islands and caused overcrowding in larger ones within the same groups. Rural to urban migration has exacerbated the effects of this trend. There has also been movement from those Pacific countries with fewer to those with greater employment opportunities. Such migration has been most pronounced among territories of the same colonial power. Mariana and Caroline Islanders, for example, can find military-related employment in Guam (USA); I-Kiribati and Tuvaluans work in the phosphate mines of Nauru (formerly UK); Tahitians, Wallisians and Futunans work in the nickel industry in New Caledonia (France).

More significant for the future is emigration from within the Pacific to the countries surrounding the ocean. Immigration restrictions in many of the rim countries make it increasingly more difficult for citizens of independent countries to make such a move. But from dependent territories there is a mounting trend. There are twice as many Cook Islanders in New Zealand and Australia as in the Cook Islands; twice as many Niueans live in Auckland (NZ) as in Niue; five times more Niueans live outside their country than in it; three times as many American Samoans live in the USA than in Samoa. Many Tahitians live permanently in New Caledonia or France. Sixty thousand Polynesians in Auckland make it the largest Polynesian city in the world. Eight per cent of all Fijians of Indian descent had emigrated to the USA and Canada before the first 1987 coup while some 30,000 have emigrated since.⁵²

The benefits of emigration include more than reduction in urban congestion. A considerable quantity of foreign exchange is generated by remittances sent home to relatives. More recently, a unique method of cashing in on emigration has been invented. In 1989, the Marshall Islands began selling passports to foreigners for a quarter of a million US dollars each. The fact that such new 'citizens' have limited rights has not been considered a deterrent. The main attraction is that the Compact of Free Association allows a naturalized citizen to enter the USA after five years in the Marshalls.⁵³ A negative by-product of emigration is the 'brain drain'. Metropolitan centres accept primarily highly qualified professionals and skilled technicians, those most needed in the Pacific itself.

Under these circumstances, radical independence is not necessarily a prized possession. Still, the Pacific has seen significant struggles for political independence. For many years, it could be claimed that the 'Pacific way' – the peaceful arriving at consensus through discussion and negotiation – had prevailed in the Pacific island people's transition to self-determination. This is no longer the case.

With Vanuatu, the 'Pacific way' entered a more violent period. Under the name of 'New Hebrides' until independence on 30 July 1980, this island territory had the

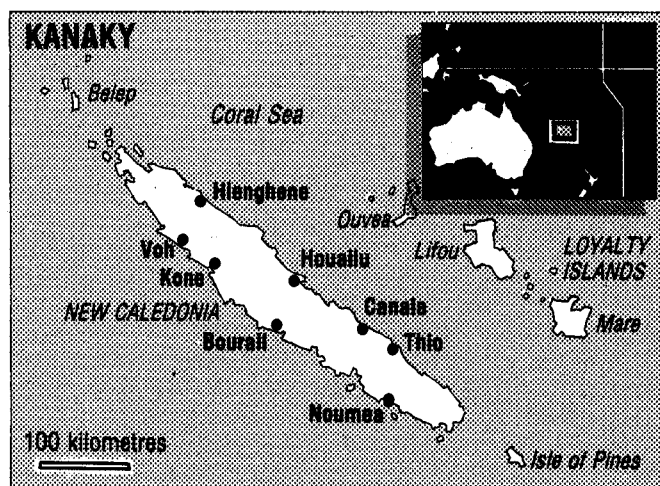
strangest of colonial structures. It was jointly ruled as a 'condominium' by the UK and France. Although neither had originally wanted to annex the group of some 80 islands, they also wanted to prevent each other from having it. Fearful of growing German interest in the area, the Anglo-French Condominium was formalized in 1906.

With two police forces, two education systems, two resident commissioners and their staff, two post offices and two chief judges, the colony was soon dubbed 'pandemonium' in English, 'pot-pourri' (hodge-podge) in French. While Britain was trying to relinquish control of this last Pacific colony (apart from tiny Pitcairn) in the 1970s, France resisted, fearing a domino effect on its other Pacific colonies. Though both colonial governments had decided on the process towards independence, France vainly tried numerous manoeuvres to create a strongly pro-French and anti-independence territorial administration between 1975 and 1979. A secessionist group in Santo and Tanna, supported by French authorities, took control of a regional government post, leading to the outbreak of violence.

Walter Lini, later to become the first Prime Minister of independent Vanuatu, unsuccessfully appealed to the UN for peace-keeping support. Six days before independence, 100 British marines and 100 French paratroopers under the command of a French colonel flew to the affected area to restore order. Unfortunately, the looting and violence continued. Two weeks after independence, Lini expelled the troops, convinced that they were prolonging, not curtailing the rebellion. Instead, he invited a PNG peacekeeping force, which managed to restore order and train a small Vanuatu defence force. For the first time in history one Pacific state had provided military aid to another. Vanuatu a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, has banned warships carrying nuclear weapons in its territorial waters since 1982.

Kanaky (New Caledonia) represents a special case.⁵⁴ With Fiji it shares the circumstance of having an indigenous population lose its majority. With Australia and New Zealand it shares the fact of a dominating European population. With only 150,000 people on an area of 19,000 sq kms., it is seen as a relatively underpopulated territory. This contributes to an immigration policy which has been actively promoted by the French government over a number of decades.

Of all indigenous Pacific islanders, the Kanak people have suffered the greatest disadvantages under colonialism, both economically and politically. They have been dispossessed of their lands and kept on reserves until after World War II.



The full right to vote was only accorded in 1957. The exploitation of nickel mines brought a boom to the economy throughout the 1960s, providing the excuse for inundating the islands with a new flood of immigrants. By 1968, Kanak people had lost their majority in a process independence leaders called 'genocide by substitution'.

Added to these problems has been the marginalization of the Kanak people with regard to social, educational and economic possibilities. The majority of labourers in the nickel mines, for example, are Pacific islanders from other regions, such as Tahiti and Wallis and Futuna. Financial transfers from France have until recently been channelled almost exclusively via French settlers. The courts, the media, commercial establishments, police force, etc. were all in French settler hands.

Resistance to French rule has a long history in Kanaky. In 1878 the Great Chief Atai led a rebellion against the French which resulted in a bloodbath for the Kanaks. One hundred years later, the Independence Front was founded. In 1979, 82% of the indigenous population voted for parties favouring independence. Immigrants benefitting from French rule prefer the status quo. Since the Kanak were and still are a minority, the French government argues that the democratic majority's wishes must be respected. Frustrated by this European numbers game, Kanak leaders began to use the methods of civil disobedience. These in turn led to violence. The blood which flowed has almost always been Kanak.

When the Socialist Party gained power in France, there were hopes of change. France began to institute reforms awarding increased political power within the Territorial Assembly to Kanak independence leaders. But in 1984 a new statute which had previously been rejected by the Territorial Assembly was imposed by the French parliament. A frustrated Independence Front renamed itself Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS), and actively boycotted the 1984 elections, set up barricades and forcefully occupied lands claimed by the indigenous people. France responded with ever greater contingents of soldiers and violence became inevitable. In December of that year 10 Kanaks, including two brothers of independence leader Jean-Marie Tjibaou, were massacred in an ambush by settlers. The settlers accused of the massacre were set free. The FLNKS declared a Provisional Government of Kanaky. In January 1985 two independence leaders were killed by police sharpshooters.

The years which followed saw a succession of new statutes arrive in Kanaky along with new High Commissioners from France. In 1987, to secure a fraudulent referendum on independence, the new French government of conservative Prime Minister Jacques Chirac sent over 8000 troops to Kanaky. The referendum was boycotted by over 80% of the Kanak population. The FLNKS, suffering a major return to primitive colonial policies under Chirac, decided also to boycott the French Presidential elections in 1988. An attempt by young people on Kanaky's poorest island, Ouvea, to stage an election protest sit-in at the local gendarmerie resulted in the killing of four French policemen and the taking of hostages by the youths to a hidden cave on the island. On 5 May, Chirac ordered paratroopers, navy commandos and elite police units to storm the cave. Nineteen Kanak youths were killed, at least three of them after they had already surrendered. In the period that followed, the new French Socialist administration of Prime Minister Michel Rocard made efforts to reach an agreement between Jean Marie Tjibaou and Jacques Lafleur, leader of

the main settler-dominated party, the Rassemblement Pour la Caledonie dans la Republique (RPCR). An accord was signed at Matignon in Paris which held out the promise of social peace, if not satisfaction of Kanak claims. The Matignon Accords were ratified in a national referendum and are presently being implemented. A year of direct rule from Paris was followed by local elections for three Provincial Councils. The territory was divided into three provinces in such a way as to give greater self-government into Kanak hands. The territorial elections of 1989 gave control of two provinces to the FLNKS. After a 10-year transition period, in which France will contribute extensive funds for Kanak economic and social development, a referendum on independence is to be held in 1998.

The Matignon Accords are not supported by all on either side, and this provides continued cause for tension. A significant minority of Kanaks felt betrayed by the agreements, viewing them as French manipulation and a denial of justice for the Kanak people. This perspective and the bitterness remaining after the Ouvea killings of 1988, led to the assassination on 4 May 1989 of Jean-Marie Tjibaou and his deputy, Yewene Yewene, by a Kanak militant in Ouvea.

The extent of the violence generated against the Kanak people's pursuit of independence is in stark contrast to transitions in other parts of the Pacific. But at the western edge of the Pacific, two even more uncivilized struggles are taking place, dubbed by some as the 'forgotten wars'.⁵⁵ In West Papua (Irian Jaya), the *Organisasi Papua Merdeka* (OPM) or Free Papua Movement has waged a guerilla war against the Indonesian occupants from before 1969, when Indonesia officially declared the area an autonomous province of Indonesia. Indonesia claimed to have obtained the unanimous backing of indigenous Melanesians for the annexation, although the 'Act of Free Choice' of 1969 was widely criticized by international observers as coercive.

Factionalism within the OPM sapped the strength of the movement during the 1970s, but a massive transmigration plan by Indonesia revived the opposition in the early 1980s. As many as one million migrants from the overcrowded Indonesian island of Java were to be settled in West Papua, threatening eventually to outnumber indigenous people. In early 1984, an estimated 10,000 refugees fled the fighting across the border into PNG. Indonesia claimed that these refugee areas were the base camps of the guerilla movement and stationed 10,000 soldiers in the border areas. Frequent forays into PNG territory have been made since that time.

PNG, fearing an open conflict with Indonesia, has followed an appeasement strategy. In 1986 the UN High Commissioner for Refugees became involved in the refugee problem. In 1987 a PNG-Indonesian friendship treaty was signed and in 1988 refugees were removed by PNG from the border areas. In 1990 a new agreement on closer security cooperation was signed between the two countries. Yet the fighting still continues, claiming hundreds of victims. In spite of international criticism of both Indonesian and PNG governments, a solution is not in sight.

Not always considered a Pacific territory, the situation in East Timor is even more dramatic than that of West Papua. In 1975, when the revolution in Portugal led the new government to shed its colonies, Indonesia invaded East Timor and annexed it. The UN Security Council declared the annexation illegal. The UN still considers Portugal to be the 'administering power'. The Revolutionary Front of

THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Independent East Timor (Fretilin) has waged a desperate guerilla war against Indonesian atrocities which have claimed the lives, through fighting, starvation or execution, of more than 200,000 people, or a third of East Timor's population. There are presently 40,000 Indonesian troops in Timor. Over 100 people have died in the fighting in the first half of 1990 alone, while Indonesia has beaten and tortured Timorese who have taken part in pro-independence demonstrations.

The discovery of oil in the Timor Sea, a 400 km. stretch of water between Timor and Australia has hardened Indonesia's position against the rebels and softened Australia's opposition to the annexation. In December 1989, the Timor Gap Treaty was signed between Australia and Indonesia for oil exploration with a potential worth of billions of dollars.

For many Pacific islanders, the role of the UN has been disappointing. Before the 1960s, the decolonization process largely ignored the Pacific. The prevailing ideology held that independence demands certain criteria of size, resources and preparedness that were not seen as being satisfied in the case of Pacific micro-states. Newly-independent UN member states from Asia and Africa managed to change this posture. In 1960, the UN *Declaration of Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and People* demanded independence of all colonies, regardless of size or wealth.

Even so, the colonial powers were suspicious of the UN from the beginning. As noted previously, the South Pacific Commission, set up in 1947 by the colonial governments, was meant in part to limit the activities of the UN in the Pacific. Even when the mechanisms for decolonization, such as the UN Special Committee on the Implementation of the Declaration, was in place, other structural difficulties severely limited UN activities. It is highly unusual, for example, for the UN to take up any issue which is not supported by the majority of the region's member states, or a regional inter-governmental body. New Caledonia for this reason did not even figure on the UN's agenda until 1986. Only then did the Pacific Forum finally agree to bring the issue before the UN, in defiance of France's vehement objections.

The UN has been most active in the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands, where structural mechanisms of review are in place. The Trust Territories are under the responsibility of the Security Council, with a Trusteeship Council regularly reviewing such issues as compensation for nuclear testing, war damage claims, political, economic, social and educational advancement. The 'Administering Authority' (USA) has to report annually to the Trusteeship Council, and periodic UN Visiting Missions to the area are undertaken. Missions have also been sent to observe plebiscites, such as those in Palau/Belau.

But apart from writing reports and posing questions, the UN has little power in the area. For some years, the USA has tried to rid itself of the nuisance of even these intrusions. The Compacts of Free Association (CFA) are designed to provide that freedom. CFAs have no precedent in US constitutional practice or international law. Comparison with New Zealand's Free Associations does not hold. Basically, a Compact provides full self-government, including some capacity in foreign affairs. The USA, on the other hand, retains full responsibility for defence for a period of 15 years. In the case of Belau, the period is 50 years. The term of the Compact is indefinite, but it may be terminated bi- or unilaterally. The USA will provide agreed amounts of economic assistance, to be spent in accordance with jointly developed programmes. Subsidiary agreements allow the USA to use the Kwajalein Missile Range for a period of up to 30 years and a contingency land-use right in Belau for military purposes (ie. as a contingency relocation site for US military bases presently in the Philippines).

The Northern Mariana Islands elected to become a 'Commonwealth in Political Union with the United States of America' and thus opted out of the Compact structure. The Mariana Constitution came into effect in 1978, and virtually assures a permanent colonial status. In 1986 the US President proclaimed the termination of UN Trusteeship over the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands. That proclamation, however, is in violation of the terms of the UN Charter, since the approval of the Security Council was neither sought nor obtained. Though the Trusteeship Council continues to

meet every year, its authority and that of the Security Council is clearly ignored by the USA.

The South Pacific Forum

Since the South Pacific Commission proscribed political comment and was dominated by foreign powers, newly-independent countries of the Pacific felt the need for a regional organization which could express their common interests. The South Pacific Forum was created in Wellington, New Zealand, in August 1971, as a body composed of the Heads of Government of independent and self-governing states in the South Pacific, plus Australia and New Zealand. There are 15 Forum members: Australia, Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Western Samoa. The South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation, created at the 1973 Apia Forum meeting, became the 'Forum Secretariat', a name it adopted only in 1988.

The fact that government heads are present at annual forum meetings makes it a versatile organization, where decisions can be taken and implemented immediately. The forum has established a number of Pacific-wide organizations such as the South Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency, the South Pacific Trade Commission, Pacific Regional Advisory Services, a Fellowship Scheme and a Regional Disaster Relief Fund. In August 1985, members of the South Pacific Forum signed the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, also known as the Treaty of Rarotonga, the Cook Islands' capital city where the meeting took place.

Membership 'in an observer capacity' is given to governments on the verge of independence. Such observer status is not granted lightly, as the case of Kanaky indicates. The FLNKS was able to persuade the Forum to support the inclusion of New Caledonia in the UN Decolonization Committee's agenda only in 1986. Only in 1990 did the Melanesian Spearhead Group (PNG, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands) admit the FLNKS to its annual summit as full members. They also called on the UN to send regular missions to New Caledonia and for increased training assistance for Kanaks. Despite this support, the FLNKS failed to obtain observer membership at the July/August 1990 Forum meeting in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement

According to the two nuclear powers in the Pacific, the USA and France, the nuclear-free movement represents the greatest danger to their supremacy. This is not an exaggerated fear. The nuclear-free idea has a large grassroots following in the Pacific, and in states with small populations its political impact can be tremendous.

The Nuclear-Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) Movement had its birth at a conference in Suva, Fiji, in 1975. This first Nuclear-Free Pacific conference was, as were its successors, composed of representatives of peace movements, ecological movements, churches, academics, unions and individual politicians. The 'People's Charter for a Nuclear-Free Pacific', which was drafted at this meeting, influenced the then Prime Minister of New Zealand to call for the creation of a nuclear-free zone treaty at the South Pacific Forum meeting in the same year.

The nuclear free movement was promoted by people's movements, unions and churches who used their respective networks for education about the nuclear issue throughout the Pacific islands. A second meeting of the NFIP movement took place in Pohnpei in 1978 and a third in Kailua, Hawaii, in 1980. At the latter, the movement's name was changed to include the independence issue. Nuclear intrusions into the Pacific, it was argued, are in fact extensions of colonialism. Independence also means nuclear independence. A revised People's Charter reflecting these ideas was adopted. The Kailua meeting also established a secretariat for the movement, the Pacific Concerns Resource Center in Hawaii.

The largest meeting of the Movement was held in 1983 in Port Vila, a year after Vanuatu had become the first country to impose a port ban on nuclear ships. At a time when the drafters of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty were under tremendous pressures from the USA and France to make the treaty more palatable to their interests, the NFIP Movement declared that the treaty should include Micronesia, the Philippines, Japan and Hawaii in addition to the South Pacific Forum nations and that nuclear weapons should be banned even aboard ships. Campaigners also supported the Kanak independence struggle, opposed the Indonesian policy of transmigration in West Papua, denounced the presence of US military bases in the Philippines, endorsed a protest against the dumping of nuclear wastes in the Pacific, condemned the use of the Kwajalein Atoll for testing of the MX and other missiles, called for an end to uranium mining in Australia and supported Belau's anti-nuclear constitution. A fifth NFIP Movement meeting took place in Manila in 1987 and the most recent in Auckland in November 1990.

Numerous grassroots actions have undergirded the NFIP campaign. The occupation of the Kwajalein test site by its landowners in 1982, the various activities of Greenpeace, protests in numerous Pacific countries, are examples. Also in 1982, the Pacific Conference of Churches produced a full-colour, easy-to-read 'Anti-Nuclear Primer for Pacific People'.

But in drafting the nuclear-free Pacific treaty, the South Pacific Forum began to make compromises with nuclear powers. In order to make it possible for the USA to sign its protocols, the drafters decided to establish a nuclear-free zone only south of the Equator, excluding US-controlled Micronesia. Ballistic missile tests were not prohibited nor were facilities which are part of nuclear war systems and networks. Despite the protests of Vanuatu, which refused to sign the Treaty because it did not go far enough, and Tonga, whose King wished to be free to invite the US navy in its ports if he considered that Tongan security was at stake, the Treaty has been signed by all remaining South Pacific Forum members and entered into force on 11 December 1986.

Three Protocols to the Treaty are open for signatures of outside countries. The first invites France, the USA and the UK to apply the key provisions of the Treaty to their respective Pacific territories. To date none have signed. The other two protocols invite the five nuclear weapon states not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against parties to the Treaty and not to test nuclear explosive devices within the zone. The USSR and China have signed these protocols; France, the USA and the UK have not.

Despite criticisms relating to the weaknesses of the Treaty, the fact of its existence is due to the impact of the NFIP

ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS

Movement. Public opinion in surrounding regions has been affected by the movement. In 1987, the Philippines adopted a nuclear-free constitution and Indonesia and Malaysia, two traditional allies of the USA, proposed the creation of a Southeast Asian Nuclear Free Zone.

Nuclear wastes

Environmental threats from the testing of nuclear explosives have been dealt with above. Except for French underground testing in Moruroa, these have now ceased and present only the residual problems related to cleanup and long-term environmental and health effects. On the other hand, continuing nuclear weapons production is responsible for the creation of large amounts of high, medium and low level nuclear wastes.

Already in 1981 it was reported that in the USA some 600,000 tons of highly radioactive material and about two million cubic metres of low-level trash was being stored 'temporarily' in tanks and burial pits in government reservations. Between 1946 and 1970 the US Defense Nuclear Agency dumped tens of thousands drums of nuclear waste into 50 ocean sites, 12 of which were in the Pacific.⁵⁶ In addition, there are over 135 nuclear power plants in countries around the Pacific rim, producing radioactive wastes. Japan, which already has 39 nuclear facilities, plans to build 15 more in the coming years.⁵⁷ Japan has dumped tens of thousands of drums of low-level waste into the northwest Pacific in the past decade. South Korea dumps wastes in the East China Sea. Accurate statistics for nuclear waste dumping, especially in the earlier periods, are unavailable, as much of it was, and continues to be, carried out in secret. The Marshall Islands have recently been asked to accept nuclear waste from US power plants. Some 15 to 20 dump sites are said to have existed in the Pacific as early as 1980.

Toxic wastes

Johnston (Kalama) Atoll has recently come to the world's attention. Approximately 1130 kms. southwest of Hawaii, this coral atoll is 25 km. in circumference and one of the most isolated in the world. Johnston Island's landing strip runs the full length of the island. Two additional islets are entirely artificial and a fourth is only half-natural. Johnston is a US storage and disposal site for dangerous substances. Eighteen million litres of dioxin-contaminated Agent Orange defoliant remaining from the Vietnam war were stored on the atoll and burned offshore on a Dutch incineration vessel. The German company Vesta is planning to use two similar ocean incinerator ships, *Apollo I* and *Apollo II*, in the Pacific.

The disposal of toxic wastes in the Pacific is not new. In recent years, island states have been offered lucrative contracts for the disposal of the staggering amount of toxic substances generated by industry in North America and Western Europe. The USA alone produces 600 million tons of solid and toxic wastes each year. Western Samoa, American Samoa and the Solomon Islands have all declined disposal deals from US companies. Papua New Guinea is being offered a \$US 38 million disposal plant by the US firm Global Telesis Corporation and \$US 60 per ton of imported waste (disposal fees in the USA range from \$US 200 to \$US 2000 per ton). The same company has also made offers to Vanuatu. Tonga has recently decided against accepting a contract for the dumping of tens of millions of toxic wastes on one of its islands.⁵⁸ The USA is currently building a \$US 240 million Johnston Atoll Chemical Agent Disposal System. There are already 300,000 pieces of chemical weapons ready to be disposed of on Johnston, including stockpiles shipped from the Japanese island of Okinawa. Yet Johnston is intended to be the major site for the disposal of chemical weapons for the Western world.

At the June 1990 Bush-Gorbachev summit, an agreement was signed to destroy all existing stockpiles of chemical weapons by the year 2002. Both countries are committed to begin elimination by 1992 and to destroy at least half of all weapons by 1999. The USA intends to do this on Johnston Island. This operation will involve transporting 100,000 artillery shells containing 435 tons of GB (Sarin) and VX nerve gas from their depot at Clausen, Germany, half way around the world to Johnston.⁵⁹

The plan has aroused a major political furore among Pacific nations. Only Australia and New Zealand among the 15 nations attending the South Pacific Forum meeting in Port Vila in July/August 1990 publicly supported the Johnston incineration plan. Even their support is conditional on environmental safety. Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke promised to send an independent scientific mission, including island country officials, to Johnston. Then Prime Minister of New Zealand, Geoffrey Palmer, released a study by New Zealand's Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, based on US-supplied data, which concluded the project was safe for humans and the environment. The Forum did not approve the German shipments, but neither did it call for a halt to the plans. It called on American officials to shut down the incinerator after the current project because of 'significant risks and uncertainties' inherent in the programme.⁶⁰ The US Army has already released an Environmental Impact Statement for Johnston, claiming that the operation will not create any major environmental hazards. Greenpeace, which has commissioned studies of this and previous statements, points to numerous deficiencies and dangers inherent in all state-of-the-art incinerators.

But environmental hazards are only one part of the problem. Pacific islanders object to being used as the solution to problems they did not create, caused by policies over which they had no control, and from which they did not benefit. As the Pacific Conference of Churches president, Bishop Leslie Boseto of the Solomon Islands said:

*'The Pacific is not just an ocean. It's a people - people who see themselves as the trustees of the environment.'*⁶¹

There have been some positive steps. In November 1990, the European Community (EC) agreed to ban exports of toxic and nuclear wastes to African, Caribbean and Pacific trading partners. Fiji, Kiribati, PNG, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Western Samoa and Vanuatu signed the waste ban.⁶²

Other environmental issues

Depletion of tropical rain forests has affected the Pacific to as great an extent as the Amazon and regions of Africa and Asia. New Guinea, the world's largest tropical island, is most affected. The Indonesian government has plans to log up to 60% of West Papua's rain forests, and according to the 26-month Barnett Commission of Enquiry, PNG's timber industry is out of control:

'Some of the companies... are now roaming the countryside with the self-assurance of robber barons; bribing politicians and leaders and creating social disharmony and ignoring laws in order to gain access to rip out and export the last remnants of the... valuable timber.'

the Commission stated in 1989. In April 1990 PNG announced a two-year moratorium on new logging permits, but the permits already granted allow logging for at least another 15 years.⁶³

In the Solomon Islands, forests are threatened with disappearance within five to 10 years. Other areas of severe logging have been Vanuatu, New Caledonia (already down to its last few pockets of forest), Fiji and Samoa.

Mining, particularly strip mining, is causing erosion, the depletion of topsoil, and pollution of rivers and reef areas. Some of the main areas of concern are nickel mining in New Caledonia, copper mining in Bougainville, phosphorus mining in Nauru. Nauru is seeking \$A72 million compensation from Australia because of decades of topsoil removal due to mining. Although secessionist sentiments among Bougainville inhabitants have long been in ferment, the present crisis with PNG has in large part been precipitated as a result of the environmental devastation caused by the copper mines.

Drift-net fishing has only recently been condemned as part of the general concern about over-exploitation of pelagic resources in the Pacific. Suspended from floats, drift-nets are walls of nylon too fine to be detected by sonar. Fifty to 80 kms. in length, these nets trap everything in their path, resulting in the killing of whales, dolphins, turtles, diving sea birds and other species in addition to the tuna for which they are designed. Albacore tuna will be threatened with extinction in the near future. Lost nets are a hazard to shipping and can continue to trap creatures for years.

Each night in the North Pacific the drift-net fleets of Japan, Taiwan and South Korea set enough net to wrap around the earth's equator one and one quarter times (50,000 kms.)⁶⁴ A campaign of the South Pacific Forum nations has led to a UN resolution that will ban drift-nets in South Pacific waters from the middle of 1991. Taiwan has already agreed to ban drift-nets as of 1 July 1991. Australia has banned the import of tuna from drift-net fishing nations. Australia and New Zealand have also agreed to patrol the use of drift-nets in the Pacific by means of air force surveillance flights, beginning in August 1990.

Global warming has been detected by scientists, caused by the build-up of carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere from the burning of fossil fuels. Some have predicted that this will lead to a 'greenhouse effect', which among other things threatens to melt polar ice caps and cause a rise in the earth's sea levels. Although scientists are still divided about the ecological repercussions of the greenhouse effect, some are predicting a one-metre rise in sea levels in the next 50 years. For low-lying countries such as Kiribati, Tuvalu, Tokelau and the Marshall Islands, which sit less than five metres above sea level, such a development could be life threatening. Agriculture would be disrupted. Drinking water would be spoiled. Cyclones would be more frequent and violent. Fish stock close to shores and coral reefs would be destroyed. Even in countries with higher land, such as PNG and Western Samoa, most crops are grown in coastal areas and would become vulnerable. The incidence of malaria would increase. Australia is funding a five-year, \$A 7 million programme to monitor sea levels in order to determine the speed of increases. Meanwhile, cynical companies are trying to make money from the fears which have been aroused in the Pacific about global warming. The Seattle-based firm Admiralty Pacific has offered the Marshall Islands a scheme to insure protection against the greenhouse effect. It hopes to ship 15 million kilograms of municipal wastes, representing one third of California's garbage, to low-lying atolls in order to raise their altitude above sea level.⁶⁵

POSSIBILITIES FOR CHANGE

Post-Cold War world order

The operation of perestroika and glasnost in the USSR, the liberalization of Eastern Europe, and the defusion of the Cold War through unprecedented disarmament offers by USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev have caused dramatic changes in the climate of international relations. A bipolar world is quickly changing into a multipolar world, creating new possibilities for the exercise of self-determination and sovereignty, but at the same time causing new insecurities.

The seven-point peace plan announced by Gorbachev in September 1988 had implications also for the Pacific-Asia region. It has placed the USA on the diplomatic defensive in the region. Doubts about the continuing relevance of the 'Pax Americana', which has been the framework of American presence in the Pacific for the past 40 years, have deepened. More and more people in the Pacific basin regard the US military presence as an obstacle, rather than guarantee, of peace.

Two reactions have been evident. The allied governments of Japan and South Korea have shown reluctance to submit to pressures by the USA to increase their military spending. Popular sentiment is opposed to military build-ups, especially now that the perceived 'Soviet threat' has dissipated. Recent US claims that the USSR has been increasing its naval presence in the Pacific have been met with extreme skepticism. The economic competition between the USA and the NICs have sharpened, with the USA increasingly adopting protectionist methods, alienating its strongest allies.

On the other hand, there is a marked build-up of weapons in ASEAN nations. With the market for arms diminished in Europe, arms producers seem to be dumping sophisticated weapons in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. This has serious implications for countries such as Fiji (especially since the 1987 coup), PNG (currently involved in a secessionist war with Bougainville) and Indonesia (whose counterinsurgency wars in West Papua and East Timor have shown little sign of dissipating).

The USA has recently defended its military interests in the Pacific region by claiming to be the only policeman able to keep the peace among conflicting parties in the area. The Cold War had served to provide cohesion through a common enemy. Now traditional rivalries would come to the fore. This could well be a self-fulfilling prophecy. US private enterprise has been in a vicious competition with corporations of allied countries in the Pacific rim, and this is sure to increase as new resources come to be known and exploited. The methods of persuasion used by foreign businesses have included offers promising fabulous wealth to the ruling elites of micro-states at the price of the long-term welfare of their populations.

Competition for the benefits offered by outside capitalist interests is causing rifts in the solidarity of Pacific nations. It is also creating internal tensions, especially in areas where there have been long-term grievances. Numerous island peoples have never felt comfortable with the current division of states, a legacy of colonial provenance. The case of Fiji has already been examined above. Ethnicity has also played a divisive part in Vanuatu. And even more recently, in PNG, it has had particularly deadly repercussions.

Since November 1988, a secessionist struggle on the island of Bougainville has promised to tear PNG apart. The copper

mines on Bougainville account for nearly 30% of the total PNG economy, 60% of its exports. Yet this income, amounting to one million Australian dollars per day, represents only 17% of the profit of the mines, which are owned and operated by an Australian company, Bougainville Copper Ltd. Over the years, the island's traditional landowners have protested in vain about the lack of benefits they receive from the original 1967 Copper Agreement. Periodical renegotiation was stipulated but never carried out. The richest province of PNG, Bougainville also has its worst slums. The Bougainville Revolutionary Army has been fighting the PNG military for two years. Amnesty International has drawn attention to the PNG military forces' atrocities: illegal arrests, torture, extra-judicial executions and more. To date about 100 people have been killed. At the time of this writing, PNG has blockaded the island and starvation is feared. Relations have soured between PNG and its nearest neighbour, the Solomon Islands, whose people are ethnically related to Bougainvilleans.

Such increased tensions and conflicts are already being exploited by external powers able to supply military aid. France has significantly increased its aid to Fiji since the coup and Australia is cooperating militarily with PNG. Conflicts naturally arise also between those in the Pacific who are willing to become client states of outside powers, and those pursuing an independent line. The maverick stance of Vanuatu has already earned it a reputation as the 'Cuba' of the Pacific. The USA acting as 'policeman' among states is an extension of the concept of 'strategic denial' and the old colonial tactic of 'divide and rule'. The success or failure of this tactic will be a test of pan-Pacific solidarity.

Nuclear compensation

The new world order will increase pressures on France, the last country to test nuclear weapons in the Pacific. France has indicated no willingness to cease testing. With the 1992 European Community deadline approaching, France will be brought into even closer economic proximity with an economically powerful united Germany. French leaders wish to keep their military options open.

For the time being, France insists that its nuclear tests are safe for the environment and peoples of Polynesia. But French economists might wish to follow the process of compensation claims in other areas of the Pacific. Aboriginal Australians are demanding and receiving compensation from the UK and Australia. And even larger claims are being won in the Marshall Islands. The Nuclear Claims Tribunal in the Marshalls has recently released a list of 23 radiation-caused illnesses, 18 of which are forms of cancer. Payments which will total \$US 45 million are beginning to be dispensed in 1990. All reported cancers must have occurred within 40 years from the date of the last atmospheric test in 1958 (30 years for leukemia). To substantiate claims, an independent nationwide radiation survey is being undertaken in 1990. It is the first study of its kind and will be carried out by a panel of international scientists from the Netherlands, UK, New Zealand and Germany. In addition to health surveys, the scientists will take soil and food samples on all islands of the Marshalls.

These compensation arrangements, coming far too late and with far too little resources nevertheless lend weight to the determination of Pacific islanders to enforce the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty. This issue, more than any other, has provided a rallying point for Pacific unity.

Preservation of resources

Constant references to the 'Pacific Century' underline the importance of the Pacific not only to the countries surrounding it, but to the entire world. There is mounting evidence of vast mineral resources in the seabeds of South Pacific island states. These include bauxite, copper, nickel, gold, chromite, silver, manganese, phosphorus, and quite possibly oil and natural gas. But the seas themselves have a wealth of food resources, such as fish and crustaceans, and less tangible resources such as marine space, shipping lanes and above all, rich and varied indigenous cultures.

It is the culture of the island people which is perhaps the most endangered. And here lies a difficult dilemma. In order to maintain control over the vast resources of the Pacific, the people of the Pacific must adapt to the information needs that make their exploitation possible. In order not to be recolonized by foreign commercial and technocratic powers, the Pacific peoples must themselves acquire the education, information and expertise necessary for the recovery of their riches.

But this may come into direct conflict with traditional cultural approaches of community living and sharing. It is the wedding of traditional belief systems – cultural values such as respect for land and nature, responsibility for the larger community – with modern technology, economics and international diplomacy, which will make the difference between exploitation and sustainable, self-reliant participation within a world community in the Pacific Century.

International solidarity

Most of the issues that concern the Pacific region are issues that concern all humanity. Whether it is militarization, the testing of nuclear weapons, the exploitation of people and resources, the creation of dependencies or the destruction of the environment, the micro-states of the Pacific are not alone in their struggles.

Nonetheless, the nature of international communication is such that the problems of the Pacific are not well known and have not penetrated into the consciousness of many of the world's peace, human rights and ecological movements. The Nuclear-Free and Independent Pacific Movement is an important link in this process. Treaties such as the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone and the Law of the Sea are successes brought by struggles which have been joined by people from many regions.

Increasingly, the people of the Pacific basin, those living in the ocean and those surrounding it, are becoming aware that their fate is linked. An example of such awareness-building is the Pacific Ecumenical Forum, a project co-sponsored by the Pacific Conference of Churches (the most representative body in the South Pacific), the Asian Conference of Churches, and the ecumenical movements of North and South America. A recent meeting of this Forum stated: 'Recognizing the common basis of our wider Pacific community means seeking solidarity with each other's struggles.'

The Pacific issues outlined here clearly point to the interrelatedness of so much which threatens our world, but also so much which offers possibilities for change. Centuries ago, Europeans were unaware of the existence of the Pacific and its peoples. Today, most Europeans and North Americans know only the idyllic images portrayed in tourist

advertisements rather than the damage inflicted upon peoples and environment. But what happens in the Pacific during the next decade and century will have a profound effect on the whole world. The Pacific and its peoples can no longer be ignored.

CONCLUSIONS

Many readers of this report will be shocked by the story it tells of the callous disregard of the human rights of the island peoples of the Pacific – of nuclear weapon experimentation, of military testing, of indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources, of ecological destruction, and the denial of self-determination to many of its peoples. But undirected outrage can only lead to despair and this cannot help these victimized peoples. They are organizing to protect their communities and homelands and to succeed they need practical support and political action.

The Minority Rights Group advocates that individuals, organizations and governments should press for political changes to support basic human rights standards and, especially, to protect the rights of minorities. It considers that the Pacific island peoples constitute a powerless minority, since the decisions most vital to their future are taken outside the region.

For policy-makers, both those based in the Pacific and those outside, a series of recommendations arise from this report. It therefore urges all those who are concerned with the peaceful and prosperous future of the Pacific to study these recommendations. They fall into four main categories: firstly recommendations with regard to self-determination; secondly recommendations concerned with nuclear and military testing; thirdly, recommendations covering broader environmental issues; and finally recommendations on human rights and minority rights.

Recommendations on Self-determination

■ All peoples of the Pacific have the right to determine their future political status, without illegal or unreasonable pressure from outside powers, and without prior limitations being placed upon their choice. Choice of political status should be determined by free and fair means, without outside pressure and subject to international (including regional) scrutiny.

■ All states should observe the following articles of the UN Plan of Action for the Full Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, 1980 :

' 8. Member States shall adopt the necessary measures to discourage or prevent the systematic influx of outside immigrants and settlers into Territories under colonial domination, which disrupts the demographic composition of those Territories and may constitute a major obstacle to the genuine exercise of the right to self-determination and independence by the peoples of those Territories.

9. Member States shall oppose all military activities and arrangements by colonial and occupying Powers in the Territories under colonial and racist domination, as such activities and arrangements constitute an obstacle to the full implementation of the Declaration, and shall intensify their efforts with a view to securing the immediate and unconditional withdrawal from colonial Territories of military bases and installations of colonial Powers.'

■ The South Pacific Forum should be recognized as the relevant international collective organization of the region with regard to issues of self-determination and regional security. Particular notice should be paid by UN members to the attempts of the Forum to make the Pacific a 'zone of peace' and to observe the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty.

Recommendations on Nuclear and Military Testing

■ The Pacific is a major area for nuclear testing by outside powers. No further testing should take place unless all those nations who are likely to be affected by testing are given full information on the immediate effects and likely consequences of testing, and give their open, free and full consent to it.

■ Full information on past and present nuclear testing and its effects should be made available to all who wish to obtain it. The results should be available for regular international monitoring by the World Health Organization.

■ Generous and immediate compensation should be made available by the government's responsible, to all peoples affected by nuclear and other military testing. This compensation would not only be for medical costs but also for loss of home and livelihood, for distress and sorrow. It should be recognized that compensation, however generous, cannot replace what has been destroyed.

■ Nuclear testing has had adverse effects on the people, animals and the environment, through damage to the earth's structure and by radiation through the food chain. The full long term effects of such testing is still unknown. There should be a comprehensive, fully-funded international research programme to study the effects of nuclear testing and to find and implement ways to mitigate its effects.

■ The Pacific is a major area for non-nuclear testing by outside powers. No further testing should take place unless all those nations who are likely to be affected by testing are given full information on the immediate effects and likely consequences of testing, and give their open, free and full consent to it. Generous and immediate compensation should be made available to all peoples affected by military testing or exercises.

Recommendations on the Pacific Environment

■ The Pacific Ocean is a fragile environment and needs to be protected. There should be an international conference, to be attended by all states and territories in, around or with interests in, the Pacific, which will decide on and implement immediate and practical measures to protect the Pacific environment.

■ There should be an immediate moratorium on plans to store and incinerate dangerous toxic substances such as chemical and biological weapons on Johnston Atoll and in any other Pacific territories. There should be a fully-funded international effort to find alternative ways of storing or disposing of these weapons outside the Pacific.

■ No nuclear materials, including low level nuclear waste from nuclear power stations, or toxic wastes, should be deposited in any land or ocean area in the Pacific. All states should sign the London Dumping Convention and all efforts should be made to strengthen its provisions.

■ Practices which are environmentally destructive and damaging to Pacific economies, such as drift-net fishing and dumping of toxic wastes, should cease immediately. International standards must be applied and monitored.

Recommendations on Human Rights and Minority Rights

- All independent Pacific states and self-governing territories should make efforts to ratify and observe basic international human rights standards. All outside states with Pacific territories should ensure that basic human rights standards are ratified and observed.
- All independent Pacific states and self-governing territories should make efforts to protect the rights of resident minorities within their territories.
- The Pacific islands possess a wide and rich variety of languages and cultures. Education should aim to assist the promotion, protection and preservation of threatened Pacific languages and cultures, while ensuring that Pacific islanders have full access to relevant educational opportunities within and outside the region.
- The Christian churches, through the Pacific Council of Churches, has a vital role to play in the education in and protection of the human rights of the peoples of the Pacific, both in the region and internationally.
- The South Pacific Forum and the UN Human Rights Commission should play a role in the monitoring of basic human rights standards in the Pacific region.

Footnotes

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