chose a new pulenuku, Paulo Kitiona, very popular with the aumaga (village workforce) and a young graduate of the University of the South Pacific. On Nukunonu (the more lightly populated of the three atolls), new leaders, Mika Koloi (pulenuku) and Salesio Lui (faipule), were selected.

The choice of Lui, a man in his mid-thirties, as faipule represented a particularly notable departure for a community that has always lodged authority and decision-making power with elders and older heads of families. A graduate in political science from the University of the South Pacific and a school-teacher, Lui’s perceived strengths include an understanding of the public service and an ability to articulate alternative policies and perspectives at both island council meetings and the General Fono. It seems clear that some Tokelauans wish not only to enhance traditional authority but also to advance individuals with the skills and confidence to represent them in exchanges with New Zealanders, their own public servants, and the international community.

STEPHEN LEVINE

WESTERN SAMOA

In January 1990, the academic world was shocked when a principal informant of Margaret Mead, Fa’apu’a Fa’amu, admitted that she and other teenage girls had fabricated stories about lovers in 1926 to tease and humor the young American anthropologist (so, 3 Jan 1990). Meanwhile, an academic controversy of a different kind continued to rage at the National University of Samoa. Matters came to a head on 14 August 1989, when the professor of Samoan language and culture, Dr Aiono Fanaafi Le Tagaloa, was summarily dismissed by vice chancellor Tauiliili Uili (st, 25 Aug 1990). Critics charged that she was ousted because of her association with the opposition party, and that the minister for education and chairman of the university council, Patu Afaese, was behind the sacking.

Although Dr Aiono sought a supreme court injunction and was reinstated a week later, the University Lecturers’ Association and some members of the university senate charged the vice chancellor with mismanagement when the university council met in October 1989. The council responded by setting up a subcommittee, including Professor Colin Aikman of New Zealand, to investigate (st, 6 Oct 1989). The vice chancellor himself responded by suing both the lecturers’ association and the senate petitioners on the grounds of character defamation (st, 17 Nov 1989).

The subcommittee submitted its report in November 1989. However, the university's executive council went into a long recess, and was not convened again until early in August 1990. When the report eventually came up for discussion, chair Patu Afaese insisted that things were back to normal on campus and that everyone should now forget about the past.

Over the hill from the university, the long-standing and bitter confrontation between the nurses association and Director-General of Health Dr Walter Vermeullen continued. In early August 1989, a commission of inquiry recom-
mended sweeping changes in the health department, including the removal of Dr Vermeullen. However, the government appeared reluctant to carry out the commission’s recommendations. Although the Public Service Commission had written to Dr Vermeullen on 20 September asking him to step down (SO, 3 Jan 1990), he was still living in a government house and driving a government vehicle at the end of the period under review.

One of the more controversial issues that preoccupied parliamentarians in 1989 was the accusation by Minister of Lands and Survey Sifuiva Sione that the Nauru government had given money to help the opposition’s election campaign in 1988. The Nauru government denied the charges and asked for an apology. The leader of the opposition challenged Sifuiva to provide evidence or withdraw his remarks. Seemingly unruffled by the stir he was causing, the minister did nothing to either confirm or retract his accusation. As a result of the ensuing political uproar, Nauru abandoned its plans to build a huge five-star hotel in Apia and pulled all of its investments out of Western Samoa (SO, 15 Sept, 24 Nov 1989).

Parliament also got into some mud throwing when it was revealed that the newly appointed ambassador to the United States, Canada, and the United Nations, Dr Felix Wendt, a sitting MP, would be based in New York (SO, 10 Nov 1989, 1 Dec 1989). Critics argued that the costs of a permanent post in New York were not justified and accused the government of trying to avoid intraparty rivalry by distancing one of the more ambitious government MPS from the center of power.

Early in 1990, the Special Posts Bill was passed into law. Under it, all top posts in government departments are no longer appointed by the Public Service Commission, but by the government. Justified as an attempt to make the public service more responsive to government policies and priorities, critics argued that the bill would make political affiliations rather than professional qualifications the number one criterion for selecting top executives (SO, 15 Sept, 24 Nov 1989).

Economic performance during 1989, like the year before, was mixed. The balance of payments surplus for 1989 was $0.9 million higher than for 1988, and gross international reserves increased from $98.5 million in 1988 to $126.5 million in 1989. Yet production trends for the same period were negative. In the manufacturing sector, for example, production decreased by 10.9 percent. Agricultural production improved slightly, but the volume of exports dropped 7 percent below the 1988 level. Despite improvements in prices during the year, total export earnings dropped from $31.4 million in 1988 to $28.85 million in 1989. The import bill on the other hand was a staggering $171.65 million, offset only by heavy inflows of funds from overseas. Remittances—currently the biggest source of finance for Western Samoa—were worth $86.61 million in 1989 (Central Bank, March 1990).

According to the chairman of the Western Samoa Manufacturers Association, Tuigamala A. Lam Sam, the economy was in trouble partly because the government was interfering in the private sector, “running businesses...
which it knows nothing about" (so, 9 Mar 1990). As if to prove Tuigamala right, the government in June 1990 revealed it was writing off ws$26.7 million in bad debts, mostly owed by unprofitable public corporations (so, 22 June 1990).

Suggestions were made during the year that overseas donors were trying to use aid to influence government policy. For example, a multimillion-dollar loan from the Asian Development Bank was approved only after the government committed itself to privatizing public corporations, particularly the financially troubled Western Samoa Trust Estate Corporation (so, 22 June 1990). The importance of overseas development assistance was underscored by the proposal to change the fiscal year from January to December to July to June, as used by major donors such as Australia and New Zealand (so, 22 June 1990).

Prime Minister Tofilau Eti Alesana made headlines by becoming the first Commonwealth leader to visit the People's Republic of China after the massacre at Tiananmen Square. The visit was generally seen as the price paid for the ws$18.2-million interest-free loan to build a government office complex in Apia (so, 27 Sept 1989). Earlier in 1989, Western Samoa’s high commissioner to New Zealand denied allegations by Greenpeace that Japan had bought Samoa’s silence on the issue of driftnet fishing with a WS$20-million aid package (so, 26 July 1989). Ironically, a senior government minister, Jack Netzler, gave credence to Greenpeace’s claim by suggesting in parliament the same week that his government’s position on issues pertaining to Japan in the region was being compromised by Japanese aid (so, 28 Sept 1989).

The year 1990 began with a lavish birthday party for Head of State Malietoa Tanumafili, to mark his fifty years of service to the nation. Some taxpayers were unhappy with the half-million-dollar bill for the party, and Malietoa seemed uneasy about the whole thing (so, 3 Jan 1990). The legal system was also rocking early in the year, but not to birthday music. The controversy involved Acting Chief Justice Tiavaasue Falefatu Sapolu, who charged the editor of the Samoa Times with contempt of court (so, 30 June 1990). In an article published the week before, the Samoa Times had suggested that the acting chief justice should disqualify himself from hearing a murder case because of conflict of interest. The article pointed out that the counsel for the defense was the sister of the acting chief justice and an unofficial partner in the Sapolu law firm. It also noted that the case was being prosecuted by the office of the attorney general, and that Tiavaasue still held the post of attorney general. The editor was fined ws$1500.

The Village Fono Bill, which would give extensive powers to the village fono and matai, was introduced at parliament’s first sitting of 1990. Widely criticized as a potential threat to human rights, the bill was passed into law by parliament after some modification. Support for the government’s proposal to hold a referendum on the issue of universal suffrage appeared to be gathering momentum at the end of the period under review. However, the government has made it clear that the
referendum is only meant to gauge the feelings of the nation, and a majority vote for universal suffrage will not necessarily lead to its introduction.

If 1990 will not be known as the year of universal suffrage, it will certainly be known as the year of Cyclone Ofa. For three days in February, the cyclone, believed to be the worst in history, brought things to a standstill in Samoa. It left behind twelve dead, a shattered economy, and damage estimated at more than US$200 million. Damage to infrastructure was extensive, with some villages and roads completely wiped out. Forests were badly hit, as was the agricultural sector, which contributes more than 50 percent of the GDP and employs 60 percent of the labor force. Banana and breadfruit crops were totally destroyed, and taro crops, except for the very young ones, were leveled and had to be used almost immediately.

Since the cyclone, life in Western Samoa has revolved around relief and rehabilitation. The government quickly implemented a number of measures to help the recovery. Budgetary funds were diverted to agriculture and infrastructure rehabilitation; interest rates were reduced; lending policies were altered to favor loans for cyclone relief and rehabilitation; and an export finance facility was introduced to enable commercial banks to lend to exporters at concessional rates. However, national efforts were completely overshadowed by the international assistance that poured into the country after February. Multimillion-dollar loan packages were approved by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Great Britain, West Germany, the United States, France, the European Economic Community, and various international organizations gave substantial assistance in the form of grants or relief supplies, or in kind.

The emphasis on cyclone relief and rehabilitation in the first half of 1990 has created new problems and exacerbated existing ones. The economy is far more dependent as a result of the cyclone, and the handout mentality has been further entrenched. In terms of self-sufficiency, the cyclone has put Samoa back many years.

IOSEFA MAIAVA

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