

Reviews of American Sāmoa, Hawai'i, Niue, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Wallis and Futuna are not included in this issue.

### COOK ISLANDS

Continued political maneuvering, public budget mismanagement, and population decline dominated public discourse in the Cook Islands from July 2009 to June 2010. By June 2009, Cook Islands population had diminished to an estimated 13,200 (*CIN*, 4 Dec 2009), with around 70 percent of people living on the main island of Rarotonga. During the year, New Zealand Prime Minister John Key led a sixty-eight-member delegation to the Cook Islands that included two ministers, nine members of Parliament, three mayors, several business industry representatives, a hip-hop band, and sixteen media representatives (*CIN*, 9 July 2009).

While in Rarotonga, Prime Minister Key announced a NZ\$1 million subsidy for the Air New Zealand flight from Los Angeles to Rarotonga (*CIN*, 10 July 2009). (NZ\$1 is the equivalent of approximately US\$0.73.) Key also confirmed his country's commitment to provide aid for the Pacific, although he expressed "a desire to change the emphasis from poverty alleviation to economic development" (*CIN*, 8 July 2009). The 2008–2009 New Zealand budget included a total aid package of around NZ\$10 million for the Cook Islands, with AusAID provid-

ing NZ\$1.7 million. Since 2004, New Zealand and Australia have combined their aid programs (*CIN*, 8 July 2009), with almost 40 percent now going to education and training. Key portrayed his visit to the Cook Islands as an effort to "reinforce the already close links New Zealand has with its Pacific neighbors" (*CIN*, 9 July 2009).

As the Cook Islands celebrated the arrival of Christianity 186 years ago (*CIN*, 28 July 2009), political cabinet shuffles and reshuffles, and realignments among members of Parliament (MPs) continued. Quests for political power often overflowed into public consciousness, and most residents reflected on it with much distaste. The constant strain on the government budget was of particular concern.

Financial secretary Sholan Ivaiti summarized the budget strain as competing interests chasing after limited government funds, but he identified the hosting of the Mini South Pacific Games as having the most pull on the budget (*CIN*, 1 July 2009). Mini games Minister Wilkie Rasmussen challenged Ivaiti's claim by issuing a statement that the government's funding of the mini games was expected to total no more than NZ\$3.3 million (to cover accommodation, food, and sports equipment), with this amount "not putting a strain on the government's 2009/10 budget" (*CIN*, 2 July 2009). Rasmussen even suggested that the "financial secretary's insistence on drip-feeding funds to games organiz-

ers” was actually creating further difficulties (*CIN*, 2 July 2009). However, there was a widespread notion that hosting the Pacific Mini Games would cost the Cook Islands closer to NZ\$20 million (*CIN*, 7 Oct 2009).

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Sir Terepai Maoate joined the public debate on government finances, indicating that the government had contributed well over NZ\$13 million toward infrastructure for the Pacific Mini Games—which future generations will pay for. Opposition spokesman for finance and Aitua MP Norman George described the budget inaccuracies coming from Ivaiti’s office as “alarming” (*CIN*, 4 July 2009). When Maoate later described his 2009–2010 budget totaling NZ\$215 million as “the mother of all budgets” (*CIN*, 25 July 2009), George countered by calling it the “mother of all mistakes” (*CIN*, 30 July 2009). The status of the budget was particularly disconcerting for average Cook Islanders given that total national revenue for the same period was projected at only NZ\$96 million.

In July, Cabinet Minister and Penrhyn MP Wilkie Rasmussen admitted he was making plans to form a new government and was subsequently sacked by the prime minister (*CIN*, 25 July, 29 July 2009). Rasmussen responded by calling for Prime Minister Jim Marurai to resign. Titikaveka MP Robert Wigmore, who was rumored to have leaked the takeover attempt, was sworn in as the new minister in place of Rasmussen (*CIN*, 30 July 2009). Even though he was no longer in the cabinet, Rasmussen continued to publically comment on the national budget, declaring that

“future loans by government would be unsustainable . . . for the next 20 plus years” (*CIN*, 4 Sept 2009). Rasmussen went on to suggest that the mentality seemed to be “Think Big and Borrow Large regardless of our capacity.” A letter to the editor of the *Cook Islands News* reacted to Rasmussen’s comments, pointing out that until he was sacked he was actually part of the problem (*CIN*, 4 Sept 2009).

Also during the year under review, a new terminal at the Rarotonga International Airport took shape (*CIN*, 8 Oct 2009), and the Cook Islands economic development task force revealed initiatives that include private-public partnerships and cooperation with China. The task force suggested that China was “ready and willing to assist the Cook Islands in the areas of trade, tourism, investment, food sustainability, banking, insurance, shipping, and the development of sports” (*CIN*, 14 Oct 2009). Chinese aid to the Cook Islands already included a NZ\$15.6 million soft loan and another projected NZ\$50 million loan (*CIN*, 23 June 2009).

The government secured a NZ\$13.4 million Asian Development Bank loan for investment in infrastructure improvement, and the tourism road networks in Aitutaki and Rarotonga became priorities (*CIN*, 8 Dec 2009, 1). By early 2010, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management released a report that showed total government debt estimated at NZ\$103.2 million, or “32 percent of gross domestic product for financial year ending June 30, 2010” (*CIN*, 5 Jan 2010, 1). New Finance Minister Wilkie Rasmussen, who by then had regained a ministerial position during a cabinet reshuffle

(discussed later in this review), admitted “a budget deficit of up to \$4 million,” but others suggested a NZ\$7 million shortfall (*CIN*, 12 March 2010, 1).

The nation’s social welfare system cost the government NZ\$11.3 million in the current financial year and is up for review (*CIN*, 5 Feb 2010). The Cook Islands state-owned prison in Rarotonga received NZ\$200,000 worth of renovations (*CIN*, 26 April 2010), although there were ten escapes in 2009 that had plagued prison authorities; apparently in some of the incidences “the security gate was not locked at the time of the escape” (*CIN*, 9 Nov, 12 Nov 2009). Public focus on the nation’s judicial system also noted other disturbing events. Lawyer Tevita Vakalalabure was disqualified from driving for two years after being convicted of drunken driving causing injury (*CIN*, 11 July 2009). He was eventually struck off from the roll of barristers of the Cook Islands High Court after a long history of misconduct (*CIN*, 20 Nov 2009).

Cook Islands hosted several events during the year including an under-21 international netball event, the previously mentioned Pacific Mini Games (*CIN*, 22 Sept 2009), and the Pacific Parliamentary Assembly on Population and Development-Forum Presiding Officers and Clerks Biannual thematic conference (*CIN*, 17 Nov 2009). Although such events were great opportunities to showcase the politicians and the country’s dynamic culture (*CIN*, 19 Sept 2009), many observers pondered the wisdom of hosting commitments, given the budgetary struggles facing the country.

Amid all the political power maneu-

vering, a “secret” government fuel farm proposal emerged and dominated public discourse (*CIN*, 13 Oct, 15 Oct, 15 Dec 2009). Atiu Island MP Norman George described the deal to purchase the Toa depot as a Democratic Party government bungle and called for transparency on the NZ\$5.16 million purchase (*CIN*, 16 Dec 2009). Then a secret settlement between the government and Toa Petroleum resulted in the government withdrawing from the purchase but agreeing to pay the company NZ\$1.7 million in an out-of-court settlement (*CIN*, 17 Dec 2009). In spite of an effort by the government to modify the settlement agreement, the chief justice eventually ruled in favor of the company (*CIN*, 19 May 2010). Cook Islands workers expressed their concern, describing the Toa episode as “a conspiracy, mismanagement and exploitation of public funds” (*CIN*, 18 Dec 2009). The so-called “Toagate” cost government NZ\$3 million, with nothing in return—reminding many of the 1999 NZ\$120 million Sheraton debacle, in which an abandoned resort project left the Cook Islands government on the hook for a massive loan (*CIN*, 22 Dec 2009). The debt to the Italian government was negotiated down to NZ\$13 million but the Cook Islands government still ended up paying a large sum of money for nothing in return.

As the Toagate incident unfolded, the prime minister tried to make the case that he was unaware of the deal by sacking his deputy Sir Terepai Maoate (*CIN*, 23 Dec 2009). The shared responsibility of cabinet decision making was thus marginalized, and Toagate became widely viewed by observers as a soap opera at the

expense of taxpayers (*CIN*, 24 April 2010). It prompted the sacking of key government personnel and the reshuffling of others (*CIN*, 19 May 2010). The court decision upholding the settlement arrangement increased public anger, with blame being leveled at the Democratic Party and politicians in general (*CIN*, 20 May 2010).

The sacking of Sir Terepai Maoate from the cabinet led to the resignation of several other members of cabinet who remained loyal members of the Democratic Party and their party leader, Maoate. Although also a Democrat, Robert Wigmore stayed on in the cabinet to become the new deputy prime minister. Wilkie Rasmussen, who had been previously sacked by the prime minister, returned to Marurai's cabinet. Two other disillusioned Democrat members of Parliament, William Heather Jr and Apii Piho, also accepted ministerial posts (*CIN*, 6 Jan 2010), and Marurai continued with his governance even though it was apparent that he no longer commanded the confidence of Parliament. Acutely aware of the public outcry on public budget waste, Marurai declared that his priority in his newly reshuffled cabinet was cutting costs (*CIN*, 7 Jan 2010).

Disappointed by Marurai's latest cabinet reshuffle, the leaders of the two political parties (the Democratic Party and the Cook Islands Party) prepared to remove the prime minister and his five new cabinet members with an expected vote of no confidence when Parliament reconvened (*CIN*, 8 Jan 2010). Requests for a parliamentary sitting to table the motion of no confidence were made to the head of state, Queen's Representa-

tive Sir Frederick Goodwin. As the newly appointed minister and attorney general, Wilkie Rasmussen revealed that he and Marurai were "following the constitution to the letter" (*CIN*, 8 Jan 2010) and refused to request that Parliament be called into session. MP Norman George argued that since the majority of Parliament (19 out of 24) did not support the prime minister and his government, the prime minister should not be allowed to continue (*CIN*, 8 Jan 2010). The remaining 5 members of Parliament were beneficiaries as members of the cabinet and could in essence be perceived as collaborators in the usurping of power, since no clear mandate was sought from Parliament. Both of the country's political parties contended that Marurai's new five-member cabinet falls short of the constitutional requirement (*CIN*, 9 Jan 2010). The queen's representative rejected the no-confidence petition and apparently also rejected a plea to call a sitting of Parliament (*CIN*, 12 Jan 2010). Rumors circulated that the queen's representative's contract had been renewed, and Marurai revealed that he was unlikely to request a sitting of Parliament unless he was forced to do so for budgetary reasons (*CIN*, 13 Jan 2010). With increasing outcry for changes in the nation's governance system, Marurai sent out public signals that he favored political reform (*CIN*, 14 Jan 2010).

Marurai continued to rely on a legal opinion regarding the calling of Parliament, asserting that "without his advice the [queen's representative] cannot call parliament to sit" (*CIN*, 15 Jan 2010). Marurai declared he would not quit the job of prime minister despite calls from some for him to

do so (*CIN*, 21 Jan 2010). With the Democratic Party leadership warning that members of Parliament who did not toe the official line could lose their party membership, Minister Rasmussen hinted that the cabinet of five might form a new political party (*CIN*, 4 March 2010). The three remaining Democratic Party cabinet ministers in the five-member cabinet were “given an ultimatum by the party—resign from Cabinet or be booted out of the party” (*CIN*, 18 March 2010). Both the Democratic and Cook Islands parties again urged Marurai to call Parliament into session (*CIN*, 19 March 2010), while Marurai confirmed that the queen’s representative had talked him out of a dissolution of Parliament (*CIN*, 25 May 2010).

In response to the cabinet members’ refusal to resign, Democratic Party President Makiuti Tongia declared that “the four Democratic Party ministers have sacked themselves from the party by not resigning from their cabinet posts” (*CIN*, 8 April 2010). Democratic Party affiliate and Matavera MP Cassey Eggleton complicated the debate when she became the sixth member of the controversial minority government (*CIN*, 24 March 2010). As the standoff continued, Democratic Party puna (or constituency committees) called for a conference (*CIN*, 11 May 2010). In spite of party leader Sir Terepai Maoate, party president Makiuti Tongia, and party secretary John Tangi filing an injunction to stop the party conference (*CIN*, 1 June 2010), the conference proceeded and Maoate was replaced as leader by Robert Wigmore and Sean Willis replaced Tongia as party president (*CIN*, 3 Jun 2010).

The political drama further fueled a growing independent movement among voters. With a general election expected soon, several concerned voters began seeking a third option. Dr Philip Nicholas, a prominent dentist and traditional leader, declared himself an independent candidate for the Nikao constituency in the upcoming election (*CIN*, 23 June 2010). Others indicated interest in standing as independent candidates in other constituencies, signaling an increasing loss of confidence in the political party system (*CIN*, 24 June 2010). Even Teariki Matenga, the former mayor of Titikaveka, declared his candidacy as an independent for Titikaveka (*CIN*, 25 June 2010).

The government’s continued active policy of supporting the landing of planes on Aitutaki Island on Sundays also caused many problems. Perceived government resistance to a referendum on the issue angered many Aitutakians, who had long expressed a desire to allow only emergency flights into Aitutaki on Sundays. From this issue emerged a new political movement called Te Kura O Te Au, with an expanded aim of pursuing major changes in the country’s political system—a system interpreted by most Cook Islanders as focusing overwhelmingly on the interests of those in power (*CIN*, 2 Oct 2009). Prime Minister Marurai blamed the Democratic Party for causing the fracture in the party that resulted in some Aitutaki members breaking away to form this new political organization (*CIN*, 9 Oct 2009).

Other challenges to the country’s governance system emerged. Businesswoman Teina McKenzie and a group

of concerned supporters promoted a public petition pushing for political reform (CIN, 24 Oct, 4 Nov 2009). They launched their petition, calling themselves Mou Piri and declaring that all voters should “have the right to vote for the national seats and the prime minister” (CIN, 28 Nov 2009). They lobbied for political reform (CIN, 4 Dec 2009), hoping to acquire 4,000 signatures that would be submitted through a member into Parliament. The changes put forward included the following: (1) the number of members of Parliament would be reduced from 24 to 19, with a new mix of 9 constituency and 10 national seats; (2) the 10 national seats would be contested by candidates from any electorate, with the 10 receiving the highest number of votes winning the seats; and (3) the prime minister would be the national seat candidate with the highest number of votes, assuming that he or she must have received at least 51 percent of votes (CIN, 4 Dec 2009).

During the year the government received almost NZ\$650,000 in settlements from “three South American purse seine vessels that illegally fished in the countries waters between 2006 and 2007” (CIN, 21 July 2009). The Cook Islands government also reviewed fishing licenses that had been granted in 2008 to Northern Fishing Cook Islands Ltd and their sixteen Taiwanese long-line vessels. The company had promised to incorporate “proposals to develop Penrhyn’s harbor and airport, and provide employment and income to the islanders” (CIN, 30 Nov 2009). Although Northern Fishing began operations in February 2009, a year later, the company had not fulfilled

any of its promises and also had paid only a portion of the NZ\$640,000 in license fees (NZ\$40,000 per vessel) that it owed the government (CIN, 30 Nov 2009).

In October the Greenpeace vessel *Esperanza* alerted the government about the Japanese fishing boat *Koyu Maru 3* illegally fishing in Cook Islands waters (CIN, 16 Oct 2009). A payout settlement of NZ\$1 million was later reached between Cook Islands and Japanese governments regarding the illegal fishing in the Cook Islands exclusive economic zone by the vessels *Koyu Maru 1* and *Koyu Maru 3* (CIN, 17 Dec 2009).

Marine activities were not limited to fishing ventures. A Seabed Minerals Bill was completed, setting out laws and regulations for the exploration of Cook Islands manganese nodule resources (CIN, 31 Oct 2009). The Cook Islands also planned to have the largest marine park in the world, covering all the territorial waters of the Southern group islands (CIN, 11 May 2010). There were also additional efforts to incorporate customary law into marine activities; the Ministry of Marine Resources acknowledged that the government could not currently penalize people for breaching the customary law of the *raui* (marine reserve) but hinted that “it might be about time to introduce legislation to cover it” (CIN, 13 Oct 2009).

There were several Cook Islands national alerts during 2009–2010. A general panic arose after an earthquake with a magnitude of 8.3 on the Richter scale struck Pago Pago, American Sāmoa (CIN, 30 Sept 2009). Lack of information fueled panic and became a wake-up call (CIN, 1 Oct

2009). While reviewing their own alert system, Cook Islanders raised thousands of dollars for the Red Cross to assist tsunami victims in Sāmoa, American Sāmoa, and Tonga (CIN, 7 Oct 2009). The Cook Islands also had other national alerts: tropical cyclone Nisha (CIN, 29 Jan 2010), cyclone Oli (CIN, 2 Feb 2010), cyclone Pat (CIN, 8 Feb 2010, 1), a tropical depression in February 2010 (CIN, 22 Feb, 23 Feb 2010), and cyclone Sarah (CIN, 27 Feb 2010). When cyclone Pat hit Aitutaki, the island was pounded (CIN, 11 Feb 2010). Most houses were flattened by the winds and damages were estimated at NZ\$10 million (CIN, 12 Feb 2010). Reconstruction became a major priority for the government (CIN, 22 Feb 2010), and New Zealand announced a NZ\$5.5 million recovery plan for the island (CIN, 13 Mar 2010). However, the Aitutaki mayor expressed opposition to Habitat for Humanity New Zealand's offer to build seventy-two new homes, saying that the island needs housing that is strong and suits the environment (CIN, 17 Mar 2010). Air New Zealand launched a NZ\$1.00 fare to Aitutaki for the period 21–29 March to assist in the Aitutaki recovery program (CIN, 20 Mar 2010).

There were two dramatic rescues during 2009–2010. The country's police-managed patrol boat *Te Kukupa* rescued a Canadian sailor about 450 km (280 miles) northeast of Rarotonga (CIN, 6 Oct 2009). Forty-eight-year-old Sylvain Caron and his fox terrier Eddie had for three days hung on to their sinking forty-foot ketch *Inherit the Wind* before being rescued (CIN, 7 Oct 2009). Some six months later, four other people were rescued by *Te Kukupa* after having

been stranded for ten days on Manuae Island when their rundown *Gypsy Trader* broke anchor and disappeared out to sea (CIN, 17 May 2010). Police launched an investigation into the incident (CIN, 18 May 2010).

Cook Islands Voyaging Society members assisted in constructing several sea-voyaging canoes (CIN, 28 July 2009). Two months later, double-hulled canoes *Te Marumaru Atua* (Cook Islands), *Faafaite* (Tahiti, French Polynesia), *Uto ni Yalo* (Fiji), *Matau O Maui* (Aotearoa), and *Hine Moana* (mixed nations: Sāmoa, Tonga and Vanuatu) arrived in Avana (CIN, 31 May 2010). A symbolic traditional stone-laying ceremony followed in honor of the five voyaging canoes that had sailed from New Zealand to Rarotonga (CIN, 2 June 2010).

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### FRENCH POLYNESIA

The frequent making and unmaking of political alliances by opportunist politicians, resulting in regularly occurring ousters of governments since 2004, continued during the review period, with one successful motion of no confidence in late 2009 and another change of majority in the assembly in 2010. Yet none of these events represented anything substantially new. The ongoing chaotic situation continued to annoy the French government, which by mid-2010 was planning yet another revision of the territory's organic law.

Meanwhile, the economic situation is further deteriorating.

Before this inevitable round of the political debacle began, however, public attention in Tahiti during the beginning of the review period was turned for a while to the long overdue efforts by the French judiciary to examine some of the earlier misdeeds of leading politicians. Most prominently, the investigation of corruption charges against Senator Gaston Flosse intensified in the second half of 2009 at a pace never seen before. (Former President Flosse held office as the country's top elected official under various titles 1982–1987; 1991–2004; Nov 2004–Feb 2005; Feb–April 2008.) Among other things, Flosse was accused of receiving bribes amounting to several million euros from French businessman Hubert Haddad. Because some of the payments were apparently masked as payments for advertisements in the French Polynesia telephone directory, as well as in the onboard magazine of the territorial airline Air Tahiti Nui, the corruption plot became known as the “phone book affair.”

In connection with this affair, various government departments, banks, offices, residences, and the headquarters of Flosse's party, *Tahoeraa Huiraatira* (People's Rally), were searched by the authorities, incriminating materials were seized, and enough evidence was gathered to arrest several officials and businessmen and place them in detention. By July 2009, the detained included Geffry Salmon, the former director of the territorial post office and Air Tahiti Nui; Flosse's secretary Melba Ortas; Haddad's business partner

Michel Yonker; and Haddad himself. Another former postal director, Alphonse Teriierooiterai, who had been detained earlier, was released in July pending further investigations (*TPM*, Aug 2009).

However, the principal suspect in the affair, Flosse himself, was initially protected from investigations because of his parliamentary immunity as a senator. In late June, the prosecutor's office formally demanded the lifting of Flosse's immunity, and on 22 July, the Senate granted a partial lift so that he could be interrogated for a short while in Paris a few days later. Because increasing evidence was accumulating, in late August the prosecutor's office once more demanded the lifting of the senator's immunity (*TPM*, Aug 2010, Sept 2010).

The intensification of these judicial inquiries coincided with the appointment of José Thorel as the new public prosecutor on 31 August. During his first few months in office, Thorel proved that he was much more determined to prosecute political corruption cases than his predecessor Jean Bianconi, whom some suspected of being a crony of former French President Jacques Chirac and therefore rather inclined to protect Flosse and his collaborators (*TPM*, March 2010).

Besides the “phone book affair,” judicial investigations were also conducted into the activities of the former presidential intelligence service, staffed with retired French secret service agents, which Flosse had illegally set up during his presidency in order to carry out surveillance and spying operations on his political opponents during the 1990s and early 2000s (*TPM*, Sept 2009).

A third matter, dubbed the “sushi affair,” involved the embezzlement of public funds to pay for an exclusive party hosted in the presidential palace to celebrate the expected election victory of Tahoeraa in May 2004 (a miscalculation, since the elections were ultimately won by Flosse’s opponents and marked the end of his semi-authoritarian regime). On 24 September, for this “affair,” Flosse received a one-year suspended prison sentence, a fine of more than one million CFP francs (US\$10,000), and one year of ineligibility for public office, to be effective immediately (meaning he would lose his position as senator, and thereby his immunity). However, the senator’s attorneys managed to obtain a delay by lodging a second appeal (*TPM*, Oct 2009).

As if three affairs were not enough, Flosse and his party leadership were also charged with bribing Noa Tetuanui, an assembly member who was part of the opposing coalition, Union pour la Démocratie (UPLD), which had won the 2004 elections. Tetuanui crossed the floor to join Tahoeraa in October of the same year, which led to Flosse retaking the presidency again for a few months before by-elections definitively ousted him in February 2005. While Tetuanui had always claimed his switching of allegiance had been caused by his disappointment with the policies of UPLD leader Oscar Temaru, the investigations uncovered evidence that Tetuanui had received financial aid from members of Tahoeraa at the time of his floor crossing (*DT*, 28 Oct 2009; *NT*, 28 Oct 2009; *TPM*, Nov 2009).

After the French Senate finally lifted Flosse’s immunity completely,

the country’s former strongman was arrested on 9 November and placed in detention in Tahiti’s Nuutania Prison. Flosse’s detention was considered a landmark event because it signified that the justice system was at last working properly and that even formerly all-powerful political leaders had to submit to it. After further investigation, Flosse was released on bail on 25 November but remained under judicial control (*TPM*, Dec 2009).

By that time, however, current politics had once again caught up with investigations of the past. To recall the existing situation: Oscar Temaru had been president of the country since February 2009 in a coalition comprising his own pro-independence UPLD; Jean-Christophe Bouissou’s pro-French splinter party Rautahi (Unity; the name of its caucus is Ia Ora Te Fenua [May the Land Live]); and initially, as major coalition partner, Flosse’s Tahoeraa. In April, however, after heavy arguments between Temaru and Flosse, Tahoeraa left the government, and Temaru made a new alliance with Gaston Tong Sang’s more pronouncedly pro-French coalition, To Tatou Aia (Our Land).

Given the difference in ideologies, it was not surprising that conflicts between Temaru and Tong Sang arose quickly during the following months, particularly because of Temaru’s frequent statements in favor of independence, each of which were strongly contradicted by Tong Sang (*TP*, 17 June 2009). At the same time, a group of opportunistic outer islands representatives gradually shifted their support away from Temaru and formed their own assembly caucus, named Te

Mana o te Mau Motu (The Power of the Islands), in September (*TP*, 18 Sept 2009). In mid-October, Clarenntz Vernaudo, another politician notorious for his constant changes of allegiance, formed his own political party with a few fellow opportunists, contributing even more to the political instability (*NT*, 26 Oct 2009).

While Tong Sang still rejected speculation about an overthrow of the Temaru government in October, by mid-November To Tatou Aia, Tahoeraa, and Te Mana o te Mau Motu had agreed on the formation of a new government. On 19 November, a motion of defiance, intended to replace Temaru with Tong Sang, was filed in the Assembly of French Polynesia. The text of the motion charged Temaru with lacking the skills to lead the country out of the ongoing economic crisis and being unable to unify the divided political forces. UPLD representatives, however, considered Tong Sang's move to overthrow a coalition government in which he was a participant, in order to gain the presidency for himself, as nothing but selfish and hypocritical (*TP*, 19 Nov 2009).

On 24 November, even though Tong Sang had stated before the vote that he was holding a strong majority of 32 seats, the motion was adopted by only a bare majority of 29 votes of the three caucuses, against the 24 votes of UPLD and its ally Ia Ora Te Fenua, with 3 abstentions (*TP*, 24 Nov 2009).

Four days later, Tong Sang presented his new cabinet of thirteen ministers, mainly composed of To Tatou Aia and Tahoeraa politicians who had served in previous Flosse and Tong Sang governments. Flosse's son-in-law

Edouard Fritch was appointed vice president (*TP*, 28 Nov 2009).

The replacement of Temaru with Tong Sang represented the third change of government in 2009, and the fifth since the early election of 2008. Since new parties and caucuses are often created and dissolved, and individual politicians switch parties even more frequently, it is increasingly more difficult to constitute majorities. Shortly after Tong Sang's election, a group of several hundred concerned citizens demonstrated against the political instability and demanded fresh elections in order to end the political chaos (*TPM*, Dec 2009).

Further evidence for, and instances of, political opportunism soon appeared. In December, it was revealed that Michel Yip (a former ally of Temaru who had voted for Tong Sang) was granted a concession for his pearl farm less than a month after the formation of the new government (*TPM*, Jan 2010). But on 30 November, less than a week after the vote, another reconfiguration had already taken place; Hiro Tefaarere and Clarenntz Vernaudo resigned from To Tatou Aia's caucus and joined UPLD. (Vernaudo subsequently resigned from UPLD on 25 January.) Meanwhile, Te Mana o te Mau Motu, after a few months in existence, was dissolved, with its members rejoining other formations (*TPM*, Jan 2010).

How absurd the level of political opportunism had become was demonstrated by representative Heifara Izal, who on 3 December switched parties twice within a single day, from Tahoeraa to UPLD in the morning and back to Tahoeraa in the afternoon. Both switches were documented by written

declarations—a deed possibly worthy of mention in the *Guinness World Records* as the quickest political floor crossing in history (*TP*, 3 Dec 2009).

On 11 December, another group of opportunists formed a new caucus named Te Natiraa (The Alliance), presided over by Sandra Levy-Agami (*TPM*, Jan 2010). A few days later, Chantal Galenon resigned from Tahoeraa to become an independent. This meant that Tong Sang's coalition had once again lost the majority (*TP*, 14 Dec 2009).

While plenty of new material for future investigations was being created, the investigation and sanctioning of old misdeeds continued. On 1 December, former minister Armelle Merceron, an ex-Tahoeraa member with her own adventurous history of party switching, was sentenced to a fine of 2 million CFP francs (US\$20,000) for favoritism because during her ministerial term she had awarded contracts to friends without proper public advertisement. On 2 December, Gaston Flosse was once more detained but was released again on bail before Christmas (*TPM*, Jan 2010).

While the investigations revealed ever more details about Flosse's corrupt activities, both he and his supporters remained stubbornly convinced that none of his deeds constituted anything illegal or immoral. During one examination, the judge asked Flosse how he had covered his food and clothing expenses, since water and electricity bills were all that was ever paid from his official bank account, which was fed by his generous salaries as president and senator. Flosse responded that he had not had

any such expenses because he had always eaten in the presidential palace cafeteria and had always worn the same suit. Furthermore, he said, the amount of his debt largely exceeded his funds (*TPM*, Jan 2010). According to Flosse, the money illegally received from Hubert Haddad had been used to pay child support for his many illegitimate children, not for his personal enrichment. Supporters of Flosse, including his son-in-law Fritch, therefore denied that his behavior constituted anything reproachable like embezzlement but rather gave Flosse credit for being a responsible parent (*TP*, 12 Dec 2009).

More financial irregularities and misappropriations of funds were revealed to have taken place within the territorial television station TNTV in a report from the Territorial Audit Court, released on 23 February (*TPM*, March 2010). A few months later, similar irregularities and misdeeds were reported to have occurred within the Institut Louis Malardé, a public medical research institute in Papeete (*TPM*, May 2009). Meanwhile, the gigantic new territorial hospital in Taaone (one of the prestige projects from Flosse's presidency, totally oversized for a small country) was still not in service, and its costs of operation are estimated to be so high that they risk ruining the entire government budget (*TPM*, Jan 2010). After similar instances of mismanagement were revealed concerning the international airport at Faa'a, management of the airport was taken away from the country government and returned to French state control (*TPM*, April 2010).

The juridical examinations continued but slowed in the following

months. After several convicted politicians, including Flosse, had filed a constitutional lawsuit, on 10 June the French Constitutional Council declared sentences including automatic loss of eligibility to be unconstitutional (*TPM*, June 2010). In consequence, the Paris court of appeal confirmed Flosse's earlier sentence for the "sushi affair," but left decisions regarding his ineligibility for public office to be made at another trial by a higher court (*TPM*, July 2010). Reflecting on this situation, *Tahiti-Pacifique Magazine* editor Alex Du Prel expressed suspicion that certain protective networks from the Chirac-Flosse era were still working behind the scenes (*TPM*, May 2010).

The first significant event in the New Year was French President Nicolas Sarkozy's speech on principles of French overseas territories policy, given on Réunion Island in the Indian Ocean on 19 January. Concerning French Polynesia, the president considered it intolerable that the people of the country had to suffer from the irresponsibility of their politicians and announced the elaboration of a new electoral system before the end of the year. This announcement received a rather lukewarm reception in Tahiti, since Sarkozy's government had already imposed an electoral system reform in 2007 (against the expressed opinion of the French Polynesia assembly) and held early elections under that reform in early 2008, without improving political stability at all. Another section of Sarkozy's speech encountered major criticism; according to the president, independence was an "impassable red line" for French overseas territories. Pro-independence

leaders in both French Polynesia and New Caledonia expressed their deep concern about this statement, since the concept was in clear violation of the French constitution and the UN Charter, both of which include the right of overseas territories to self-determination (*TPM*, Feb 2010). Sarkozy's controversial anti-independence statement, which had not been heard as unambiguously from the French government for many years, was then reiterated by French Deputy Philippe Gosselin (from Sarkozy's party, Union pour un Mouvement Populaire), who visited Tahiti together with Minister for Overseas Territories Marie-Luce Penchard in early February (*TPM*, March 2010).

Sarkozy's apparently chauvinistic and colonialist attitude had raised eyebrows earlier. In September 2009, the final report of the "Etats Généraux d'Outre-Mer," a series of public workshops about the future of all French overseas territories, had been presented to the president, and the section from French Polynesia contained the recommendation to create a memorial for the victims of nuclear testing on the atolls of Moruroa and Fangataufa in the Tuamotu archipelago from 1966 to 1996 (*TPM*, Nov 2009). Pretending to follow these recommendations, Sarkozy announced in October his intention to declare the former nuclear test sites on Moruroa, as well as the site of the former air force supply base on Hao Atoll, as "places of memory and territorial pride" in order to commemorate French Polynesia's contribution to French national defense—thus twisting the original proposition into its exact opposite. The local nuclear test victims' association, Moruroa e

Tatou (MeT), reacted with outrage to the president's statement, calling it a provocation and a mockery of the thousands of Polynesians suffering from various radiation-induced diseases because of the tests (*TP*, 30 Oct 2009).

The issue of health damages caused by nuclear testing was another topic prevalent during the review period. After long debates and much criticism from nuclear veterans' associations, the bill providing for the compensation of nuclear test victims introduced by Defense Minister Hervé Morin was passed in the French National Assembly on 30 June and on 14 October in the Senate (*TPM*, Aug 2009, Nov 2009). The Morin bill is intended to provide compensation for former test site workers who suffer from a number of listed radiation-specific diseases. Hitherto the victims had to prove the connection between their symptoms and radiation exposure in individual costly and time-consuming lawsuits. However, both MeT and the French metropolitan nuclear victims' association *AVEN* have criticized the bill for not going far enough. For example, in order to be eligible for compensation, patients need to prove their employment at the testing base, which is not always easy since many of them were hired on a casual basis, without much documentation. Second, the list of diseases recognized as radiation-caused in the bill is limited, and many symptoms that were suggested by the victims' associations are not included. Furthermore, the entire process is limited to people who had been physically present on the testing sites and a few defined neighboring islands, but it excludes other inhabited islands

close to the testing site that were also affected by nuclear fallout (*TP*, 5 Dec 2009). On 19 December, a protest march against the bill in its current form, organized in Papeete by MeT, gathered about 2,000 people, including UPLD and Tahoeraa political leaders (*TP*, 19 Dec 2009). However, the demonstration was to no avail, as the French Parliament passed the bill into law on 22 December (*TPM*, Jan 2010).

As the year went along, political struggles once more filled the headlines. As part of the coalition agreement between To Tatou Aia and Tahoeraa that had brought Gaston Tong Sang to power in November, Assembly Speaker Philip Schyle (of To Tatou Aia), elected in April 2009, was to resign after his one-year term expired and leave the position to a member of Tahoeraa. In mid-March 2010, Gaston Flosse announced his candidacy for this position, as per the coalition agreement, and Tong Sang indicated acceptance of this. Schyle protested vehemently on the grounds that Flosse was unacceptable due to the ongoing judicial investigations. In early April Schyle resigned from the To Tatou Aia caucus to become an independent, thereby causing Tong Sang to lose his majority (*TP*, 3 April 2010).

Intensive negotiations between the different political camps followed, and eventually the three leaders presenting their candidacy for the vote on 9 April were Gaston Flosse for Tahoeraa (and purportedly also for To Tatou Aia, according to their agreement); Oscar Temaru for UPLD; and, surprisingly, Temaru's former ally Jean-Christophe Bouissou (who had been close to Tong Sang before joining Temaru's camp).

In the first two rounds of voting, none of the candidates received a majority, because most To Tatou Aia members refused to vote for Flosse and preferred Bouissou instead. In the third round, Flosse as the third-rate contestant had to drop out, and Temaru was elected the new Speaker with a majority of 30 votes, against 20 for Bouissou and 7 abstentions. While Bouissou's scores remained constant throughout the voting, Temaru's tally increased compared to his scores in the first and second rounds, indicating that several Tahoeraa members had eventually voted for him. In his inaugural speech, Temaru thanked Flosse, whom he addressed as "aito" (hero), for his support; Flosse sarcastically responded that Temaru should rather thank Tong Sang, because the latter had broken his promise and thereby prevented Flosse from winning (*TP*, 9 April 2010). Between the first and the second rounds, Tong Sang had formally asked President Sarkozy to dissolve the assembly and call for early elections, but the French president refused, pending the planned electoral reform yet to be elaborated.

In the ensuing election of the assembly board and committees, UPLD and Tahoeraa divided the leadership positions between themselves, while To Tatou Aia got none (*TP*, 14 April 2010). Flosse meanwhile announced that Tahoeraa was no longer part of the majority, but that for the time being he would not ally himself with Temaru in order to overthrow Tong Sang as president (*TP*, 15 April 2010). This essentially meant a deadlocked situation in which Tong Sang was now leading a minority government while the assembly was run by his oppo-

nents, themselves deeply divided into two camps—UPLD and Tahoeraa.

With no solution to continuing political chaos in sight, in addition to the worldwide financial crisis, it is not surprising that the economy of French Polynesia is in bad shape. In mid-April, when the renowned American financial rating agency Standard & Poor's released its annual credit rating of all countries and territories, French Polynesia received a rating of BBB-, the second-to-worst possible grade (*TP*, 22 April 2010). The country was thus ranked on par with many developing countries in economic distress, such as Bangladesh, Gabon, and Mongolia, and got even lower ratings than other Pacific nations with economic difficulties such as Fiji and Papua New Guinea. Reasons given for the low rating were the negative growth of French Polynesia's economy, financial mismanagement by the local government, and especially the rampant political instability, which makes economic policy unpredictable and the country therefore unattractive for investors (*TPM*, May 2010). In a move that might further aggravate the bad credit ranking, in January President Tong Sang procured a loan of 4.8 billion CFP francs (US\$48 million) from France, even though French Polynesia is already highly in debt from previous loans that have never been paid back (*TPM*, Feb 2010). In addition, the country has become highly dependent on direct financial assistance from Paris, as the French government spent 239 billion CFP francs (US\$2.39 billion) in the territory in 2009 (*TP*, 5 Aug 2010). In mid-May, President Tong Sang claimed he had not been informed about the devastating finan-

cial situation during his earlier terms in office and thus had been unable to do anything to improve it—a statement through which he indirectly admitted how dysfunctional the political apparatus of the government was (*TPM*, June 2010).

The low ranking by Standard & Poor's was not the only alarming economic news. The tourism industry, once praised as the motor of French Polynesia's economic development, is in massive recession. The overall number of visitors in 2009 was only 163,000, lower than it was twenty years ago (*TPM*, Feb 2010). With most hotels seeing only 35 percent occupancy rates, many of them find themselves only one step away from bankruptcy (*TPM*, April 2010). During the past two years, 6,000 Tahitians lost their jobs, which for many of them meant sinking into total poverty, since many urban working-class families have no access to subsistence agriculture and, unlike metropolitan France, French Polynesia has neither unemployment insurance nor welfare payments (*TPM*, May 2010).

According to a study by the territorial office of statistics and the Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency) conducted in August 2009, more than one quarter of the population of French Polynesia were living below the poverty line (defined as having an income corresponding to the legal minimum wage), while at the same time the gap between the rich and the poor was increasing at an alarming rate. According to the study, income distribution in French Polynesia is much more unequal than in metropolitan France; the distribution pattern is rather

comparable to that of Latin American countries (*TP*, 10 March 2010). The reason for this inequality lies in the extreme disparity between the high salaries of the public service functionaries, who receive approximately 180 percent of their French metropolitan equivalents, and the minimum wage in the private sector, which is only about 60 percent of the French level (*TPM*, Dec 2008).

The agricultural sector, a basis for all successful Pacific Islands economies, has been totally neglected in French Polynesia. While most locally consumed food is imported, many fertile lands, formerly intensively cultivated, lie unused and overgrown. This seems astonishing, since unlike in the two other Polynesian political entities with a comparable rate of food imports, Hawai'i and Rapa Nui, most land in French Polynesia is in possession of native families and should thus be easily available for agriculture. In an interview during the annual agricultural fair in September, Tahitian agriculturalist, scholar, and activist Gabriel Tetiarahi deplored the absence of any significant agricultural policy by the successive territorial governments for decades (*TP*, 13 Sept 2009).

As if all of this was not enough, the economic problems were aggravated by natural disaster on 4 February, when cyclone Oli devastated the Tuhaa Pae (Austral Islands) archipelago south of Tahiti. Especially hard hit was the principal island Tubuai (*TPM*, March 2010).

Despite all the internal troubles, foreign affairs remained an important field of political action. During the annual Pacific Islands Forum meeting in Cairns, Australia, in August 2009,

then President Temaru demanded a Tahiti embassy in Australia as well as full Forum membership. Both of these efforts were in vain (PIR, 5 Aug 2009, 12 Aug 2009).

More dramatic was Temaru's attempt to attend the United Nations Decolonisation Seminar, held in May 2009 in Noumea, New Caledonia. Heading a UPLD delegation including his lieutenant, Vito Maamaatuaiahutapu; Senator Richard Tuheiava; and Representative Hiro Tefaarere (a turncoat politician who, originally radically pro-independence, had been part of Tong Sang's party for some time before recently rejoining UPLD), Temaru attempted to enter the proceedings of the seminar, to which he had been invited by Kanak leaders. His delegation was denied entry and physically removed from the scene by French police forces, apparently because French Polynesia is not on the UN list of non-self-governing territories, and thus its representatives were precluded from participating (*TPM*, June 2010).

The incident once more resulted in intensive polemics between pro- and anti-independence leaders in Tahiti. The absence of French Polynesia from that UN list (it was unilaterally removed by France in 1947) represents a great anomaly, since virtually all other dependent territories in the Pacific are listed. Temaru had demanded reinscription at every Pacific Islands Forum meeting he attended during his presidencies, gaining some, but not yet sufficient, international support (Corbin 2009). Each time, his initiatives provoked polemic and irrational critiques from his adversaries at home. This con-

trasts markedly with New Caledonia, where no one in the political spectrum objects to the territory's decolonization, even though the pro-French parties there want the process of decolonization to result in a status other than independence, which is only one of several options under international law (Regnault 2010).

In this context of lacking decolonization with international oversight, one of the most burning issues is the currently uncontrolled immigration of French settlers. The need for a separate body politic for French Polynesia, as was created for New Caledonia in the 1998 Noumea Accord, became clear once again when the French State Council (France's highest court) declared unconstitutional a local law enacted by the Assembly of French Polynesia that reserved 95 percent of jobs in territorial administration to persons resident for five years or more, because it infringed on equality clauses in the French constitution (*TP*, 26 Nov 2009).

With an ongoing economic crisis, increasingly corrupted and meaningless politics, as well as frustration over the lack of progress toward decolonization through the as yet unsuccessful initiatives of the UPLD leadership, it is not surprising that more radical activists are turning away from the political system entirely and creating their own institutions and governments. One of these activists, heir of the Tahitian royal family Teriihinoiatua Joinville Pomare, had to postpone his planned installation as king in September due to protests by his opponents (*TP*, 9 Sept 2009). But his organization, Te Huiarii Mataara e Pae (The Five Watchful Eyes of

Royalty, also known as the Royal/Indigenous Customary Council), continued land occupations (*TP*, 10 May 2010), and strongly denounced party politics in an open letter to President Sarkozy complaining about corruption among the established politicians (*TP*, 7 Dec 2009). In addition to three more obscure self-proclaimed royalist governments established a few years before (led by claimants Tauatomo Mairau, Bruno Tapunui Fuller, and Keatuaura Kemataru, respectively), three others were created during the review period: the highly controversial Hau Pakumotu (Government of the Island Clouds), led by Beky Teamo; the Nation Autochtone Maohi (Indigenous Maohi Nation), presided over by Faahei a Tapu (*TPM*, April 2010); and the État Indépendent du Royaume de Tahiti et ses dépendances (Independent State of the Tahitian Kingdom and its Dependencies), led by Michel Teharuru and other chiefly descendants (M Teharuru, pers comm, May 2010). All of these organizations (the list of which might not be exhaustive here) argue, if not for immediate restoration of independent precolonial kingdoms in the area, then for recognition of customary law and customary political representation, as they have been recognized by France for more than a century in both New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna.

Less explicitly political traditional cultural activities also continued to play an important role during the review period. The annual celebration of *Matarii I Nia* (Rising of the Pleiades) in late November, introduced in 2005 by an earlier Temaru government as a possible future national holiday, is now firmly established as

an annual cultural event and was celebrated this year in Papeari on Tahiti's south shore (*TP*, 27 Nov 2009). In mid-May, five traditional Polynesian sailing canoes, from Aotearoa (New Zealand), the Cook Islands, Sāmoa, Fiji, and Tahiti, met off Raivavae in the Austral Islands and continued their voyage through the country, gathering in Moorea, Tahiti, and finally Raiatea for extensive ceremonies and cultural protocol (*TPM*, June 2010).

The big cultural event of the year 2010, however, was to be the sailing of an outrigger canoe from Tahiti to China, traversing more than 10,000 kilometers of ocean through various countries of Polynesia, Melanesia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia. The voyage, intended to reversely duplicate the historic migration route of the Austronesian peoples from southern China through Taiwan and Southeast Asia into the insular Pacific, was to end in Shanghai during the 2010 Expo and attract attention to the stand of French Polynesia and the Pacific Islands pavilion. The project was initiated as a collaboration between Tahitian scientist and journalist Hiria Ottino and cultural activist Clément Pito, who had started building the canoe several years ago. While Pito continued the construction of the vessel and contributed his cultural knowledge, Ottino, who had lived in China for several years, was able to establish the necessary international contacts and procure funding from local philanthropists (*TPM*, Dec 2009). However, after the canoe had been completed, and was named *Upoo Tahiti* (Head of Tahiti) and blessed in a traditional ceremony in mid-April, the two partners had a falling-out and

Ottino subsequently left the project. Gaining the support of Assembly Speaker Oscar Temaru, Ottino built his own canoe in record time and named it *O Tahiti Nui Freedom*, in tune with Temaru's political message. Both canoes were ready to go by June, turning the cultural project into a race to reach Shanghai before the closing of the Expo (*TPM*, May 2010, July 2010).

A more serious controversy developed over another kind of vessel, the giant rapid ferry ship *King Tamatoa*, which was brought to the country by international shipowner Bill Ravel and started service between Tahiti and the Leeward Islands in March 2010, intending to revolutionize interisland communications. While many people appreciated the service offered, others were concerned about the economic impact and sustainability of operating the huge ship, which was clearly oversized for operating between small islands like those of French Polynesia (*TPM*, April 2010). Tong Sang's government refused to exempt the ferry from taxation, and since the business was not profitable, Ravel announced that the ship would suspend service unless it was granted tax-exempt status (*TP*, 7 June 2010). Since the government would not give in to these demands, the ferry eventually faced bankruptcy and in early July ceased operations and left the country (*TP*, 5 July 2010).

One of the few positive items in this review period might be that fewer prominent people passed away than during the previous review period. Tahitian economist Emile Vanfasse, former minister of finance in the first Temaru government, died on 22 November at age 69 (*TPM*, Dec

2009); US-born journalist Al Prince, editor of the territory's only English-language publication in the 1990s, the *Tahiti Beach Press*, passed away at 67 on 9 April (*TP*, 9 April 2010); and French mathematics professor Jacques Borzeix, who was instrumental in the 1987 founding of the Tahiti branch of French University of the Pacific (which later became the separate University of French Polynesia in 1999) died in June in Noumea at age 67 (*TPM*, July 2010).

The review period ended with yet another display of local politics, when on 10–14 June, French Polynesia's public servants attempted to hold a general strike to protest against the gradual cutting back of the bonuses on top of their pensions. The strike blocked the international airport for four days, leaving thousands of tourists stuck, which once more worsened the image of the country as a destination and thus contributed to the decreasing number of tourists (*TPM*, July 2010). In the end, the strike achieved nothing substantial, similar to many previous "general strikes" led by union leaders well connected with the political class and not seriously interested in solving the country's economic problems.

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## MĀORI ISSUES

Since 2008 Māori have started clawing back a few hard-earned rights. We had hoped that the Pākehā majority generally supported these. But our hopes were dashed over the past year as first the media and then the government launched racist attacks on various segments of the Māori community as part of its ongoing agenda to maintain Pākehā hegemony, that is, the retention of control of the country's resources, wealth, and privilege in Pākehā hands. Māori managed to withstand the onslaught and stand firm in the face of determined efforts to undermine our leadership. However, along the way we lost several important leaders, including our entertainer extraordinaire, Sir Howard Morrison, with his beautiful voice, dazzling showmanship, and unique Māori sense of humor. We lost him in September 2009. Then in May 2010, our internationally renowned film-

maker, Merata Mita, who produced a number of outstanding television and film documentaries on the Māori struggle against Pākehā oppression and racism, passed away.

Much of the Pākehā media animosity toward Māori in the past year focused on the Māori Party members of Parliament (MPs), and one in particular. The media had been sniping for some time with headlines such as “Māori Activists on Warpath” (*Sunday News*, 28 June 2009) and “MP's Uncle to Lead Māori Sovereignty Protests” (NZPA, 28 June 2009), referring to Māori Party MP Hone Harawira; “Government Scuppers Māori TV's Bid for Rugby Rights” (NZH, 13 Oct 2009); and “Luck Running Out for Gaffe-prone Sharples” (NZH, 17 Oct 2009), referring to the party's co-leader, the Honorable Dr Pita Sharples. Late in October unauthorized MP spending came under parliamentary and media scrutiny, and several members were targeted. At the time, Hone Harawira was part of a parliamentary delegation to Geneva for a meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the world organization of parliaments. During that meeting he sought and was given permission for leave to go to Paris for a day with his wife, a private trip that he paid for himself. On 3 November he reported the visit, and the permission to go, in his weekly column in the *Northland Age*. Pākehā media immediately dropped its investigation of unauthorized spending by other members of Parliament and turned their sights on Harawira's trip to Paris, attacking him for using New Zealand taxpayers' money, when in fact he had not. The Māori Party issued a press statement answering

the media questioning (Māori Party 2009a), and the matter should have ended there.

However, among the numerous threatening and abusive private e-mails Harawira received on the matter (pers comm, 10 Nov 2009) was one from an individual known for his attacks on his own Māori people (Mutu 2007). Most unwisely, Harawira dashed off an angry but private response in which he used English expletives to remind the individual of the widely published history of ongoing stealing, raping, and pillaging by Pākehā of Māori and our lands and resources.

For an unscrupulous and unprincipled person this presented an opportunity for media exposure, which some elements of Pākehā media in this country could be relied on to fully exploit. After his visit in 2005, Professor Rodolfo Stavenhagen, the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People, had issued a damning report in which he stated, “Public media should be encouraged to provide a balanced, unbiased and non-racist picture of Māori in New Zealand society” (Stavenhagen 2006). But that advice has been ignored, and Māori who raise the issue of Pākehā atrocities committed against Māori are still typically vilified by members of the Pākehā media.

So the unscrupulous opportunist immediately released the private e-mail from Harawira to the media and then exploited the resulting frenzy, giving numerous interviews to Pākehā media. However, Māori media were much less tolerant of his behavior.

He had miscalculated the level of support for Harawira in the Māori community, and particularly in his own Taitokerau electorate. The Māori Party leadership reeled under the racist onslaught, which was fueled by the prime minister’s publicly advising the Māori Party that Harawira should go. Harawira apologized for the hurt he had caused the party, for the offense he had caused to women by his use of English expletives, and for the bad example he had set for young Māori (Māori Party 2009b). However, he did not withdraw his reference to the history of Pākehā treatment of Māori. The Māori Party sorted itself out and Harawira returned to Parliament after the Christmas break.

That did not stop the prime minister’s or the Pākehā media’s campaign against Harawira. In January, the prime minister was reported as saying, “I would utterly reject the perspective that Hone Harawira has on New Zealand’s history and the role of settlers and others in New Zealand” (TVNZ 2010). The prime minister was advised to read the reports of the Waitangi Tribunal in order to be better informed. In February 2010, the *Dargaville News* reported that Harawira had told people at a public meeting to dump chains and anchors into the Kaipara harbor. Harawira issued a statement explaining that Pākehā speakers at the meeting had advocated the action, not he. No apology was issued for the erroneous report (*Dargaville News* editor, pers comm, 30 Aug 2010).

But Harawira was not deterred. He continued calling hui (gatherings) around the country to ascertain Māori opinion on key issues, particularly the ownership and control of

the foreshore and seabed, as well as the damage that tobacco has done to Māori. He and the other Māori Party members of Parliament continued their punishing schedule of speaking to every bill that came before the House, while actively supporting their constituents as they were driven to protest the theft of their lands and the desecration of their wāhi tapu (sacred sites). In the Far North in August 2009, Māori issued a trespass notice to a forestry company that had leased land that the Crown had confiscated, citing several years of illegal logging of native timber, failure to protect wāhi tapu, and damage to neighboring Māori land. In the same area in January 2010, Ngāti Kahu supported the repossession of their lands at Taipā after the Crown refused to discuss the return of private lands as part of the settlement of their claims. In August 2009 in the central North Island, Ngāti Haka Patuheuheu repossessed a road through their territories, accusing the government of negotiating with others to settle their claims to their own lands. In March 2010 desperate attempts by Ngāti Maniapoto of Marokopa marae to stop their wāhi tapu, Te Rongomai o Te Karaka, from being blown up by a private company, failed. Even pleas from the Māori Party co-leader, the Honorable Taraiana Tūria, went unheeded. On 10 March, the day after Clearwater Hydro company destroyed the wāhi tapu, Tūria issued an angry press statement calling them coldhearted and accusing them of having reckless disregard for mana whenua (people holding traditional authority) (Māori Party, 2010a).

Also in March, Pita Sharples deliv-

ered a hard-hitting speech on Race Relations Day in which he admitted that the relationship between the National Party and the Māori Party in government was at times “very difficult and stressful.” He regretted the decision of the government of which he is a part to have no designated seats for Māori on the new Auckland super-city council. Noting that New Zealand’s refusal to ratify or support the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was “a source of race-relations embarrassment to Māori,” Sharples said he was working hard to change that (Māori Party, 2010b).

Later in the year, it was embarrassing for the Māori Party to have to support tax cuts for the wealthy and an increase in goods and services tax after they had campaigned for tax relief for the poor. Māori unemployment was up to 15.4 percent, while the rate for Pākehā was 4.6 percent. Unemployment among Māori youth was particularly worrying, having climbed to 30.4 percent (HRC 2010). Then, in May, the prime minister intervened in negotiations to settle the Treaty of Waitangi claims of Tūhoe, declaring that the Crown refused to relinquish Te Urewera National Park to its rightful owners after negotiators had reached agreement that it would. On most of these issues the Māori Party did challenge and attack the National government.

Yet in his Race Relations Day speech, Sharples also listed positive aspects of the National–Māori Party relationship. These included the fact that the loathed Foreshore and Seabed Act 2004 would be repealed, although the gains from this were almost lost

when the government issued a discussion document indicating that the act would be replaced by legislation that was almost exactly the same as what was being repealed. To try to ensure fairer and more just legislation, intense discussions were held among the National Party, the Māori Party, the National Iwi Chairs Forum (a group of mandated leaders of iwi [tribal groupings] and hapū [groupings of extended families]).

The development of the Whānau Ora (Well Families) program that would see government agencies delivering services according to Māori societal needs and directives rather than government preferences was also an important Māori Party initiative. Yet it appeared that implementation of such a program would not be straightforward. The prime minister declared that services had to be delivered to all New Zealanders and not just to Māori. Government agencies were also resisting having to work together and having to transfer their budgets to Māori-focused agencies better placed to deliver services. As a result, only a relatively small proportion of the welfare budget was allocated to the initiative.

The Māori Party could also take credit for the tino rangatiratanga flag flying at Parliament and on the Auckland harbor bridge, even if it did only fly on Waitangi Day. The tino rangatiratanga flag was voted for as the preferred Māori flag for the country. It is strongly associated with Māori sovereignty and the struggle for Māori to free ourselves from the oppression, discrimination, marginalization, subjugation, and near obliteration we have experienced at the hands of the

Pākehā (Taonui 2010). The design represents the balance of natural forces with each other. The central white koru (depicting a young fern frond) symbolizes new beginnings and the unfolding of new life, offering the promise of renewal and hope for the future. It lies between horizontal panels of black and red. The upper black panel represents the realm of potential being, the beginnings of creation, and the long, deep darkness from whence the world emerged. It also represents the heavens and the male element. The lower red panel represents the realm of coming into being, the female element. It represents Papatūānuku, the earth mother, the nurturer and sustainer of all living things (New Zealand History online).

Māori Party support for Māori Television to lead the bid for television coverage of the Rugby World Cup included the minister of Māori Affairs providing funding for them to mount their bid. This brought the wrath of Pākehā television interests down on the minister's head when their bids were rejected by the International Rugby Board while the Māori Television bid was kept in the running. For a short but embarrassing few days, it seemed that another government minister could prevent Māori Television from continuing to bid. But on this occasion the prime minister intervened to ensure that such blatant racism could not feature in an international bidding round, correctly assessing the likely damage it would do to the country's reputation on Māori issues.

The Māori Party has insisted on a “rangatira to rangatira” (chief to chief) approach in its dealings with the National Party as well as any dealings

between Māori tribal groupings and the government. In the Treaty of Waitangi claims settlement area, the previous government set this as a precedent and the Māori Party has insisted on it being retained. As a result, several deeds of settlement have been signed between the Crown and the claimant groups, although the Māori Party has acknowledged that they still deliver only a tiny fraction of what was stolen and none of them deliver restitution at the levels available for Pākehā who take claims against the Crown.

In December 2009 both Ngāti Whare and Ngāti Manawa signed deeds of settlement. Both are part of the larger Central North Island forestry settlement (Mutu 2009, 165–166), and both had been left virtually landless as a result of the Crown's illegal activities. Their deeds of settlement signal the return of small areas of their land to their control. For Ngāti Whare the Crown will relinquish its claims to a little less than 60 hectares of their approximately 192,000-hectare territories (OTS 2009b). For Ngāti Manawa the Crown will relinquish its claims to approximately 800 hectares of their "large" territories (OTS 2009a). Also in December 2009, Waikato-Tainui signed a deed of settlement for the management of their river (Mutu 2010, 182), as did Ngāti Raukawa.

The five iwi of Te Hiku o te Ika (the Far North); Te Kawerau a Maki of West Auckland; the Tamaki Collective of Auckland; Ngāti Manuhiri, a hapū of Ngāti Wai just north of Auckland; and Ngāti Whātua o Kaipara from the Kaipara harbor all signed agreements in principle to settle their claims (OTS 2010). All agreements mention relatively small amounts of

money to buy back lands stolen by the Crown and smaller amounts of land to which the Crown has agreed to relinquish its claims. Deeds of settlement are needed to confirm each of these agreements.

By far the most significant achievement of the Māori Party this year was gaining the government's support for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is indicative of the state of Māori-Pākehā relations in this country that while Māori were jubilant on hearing the news filtering through from New York, the prime minister was desperately trying to play down its significance. Fearing a Pākehā backlash, the government had encouraged little public discussion about the declaration. There was also no announcement that New Zealand was now supporting it, prior to Dr Sharples's delivering the government's statement at the meeting of the UN Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues in New York on 20 April 2010. And the Pākehā reaction, if measured by that of Pākehā media, did appear to be generally negative. But the Pākehā media seemed to be more concerned that while Māori Television had been present in New York for the announcement, they had known nothing about it. And viewers of Māori Television were told of the pending announcement several hours before it was made. In response to Pākehā media's indignant demands of Tariana Tūria for an explanation as to why they were not told, she simply smiled and quipped that they were not indigenous.

But the significance of New Zealand's support for the declaration was not lost on Māori. Sir Taihākurei

Edward Durie, retired high court judge and long-serving chairman of the Waitangi Tribunal, sent the following message to the Māori Party shortly after the announcement in New York:

“My congratulations to the Māori Party caucus for the Party’s role in securing New Zealand’s support for the UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Were nothing else done in the Party’s lifetime, this one thing would be enough to secure for it a treasured place in Māori history.

“Notwithstanding the progress made through all the tribunal reports and court cases from the 1980s, and the consequential changes in legislation and official policy, I would still rank the day that New Zealand gave support to the Declaration as the most significant day in advancing Māori rights since 6th February 1840 [when the Treaty of Waitangi was signed].

“I do not overlook that the Declaration has only moral force. The same is said of the Treaty. Important statements of principle established through international negotiation and acclamation filter into law in time through both governments and the courts, which look constantly for universal statements of principle in developing policy or deciding cases.

“Most significant for the present is the statement that recurs throughout the Declaration that indigenous people should be dealt with through their own institutions, a matter with potent implications for the Office of Treaty Settlements, the Crown Forestry Rental Trust, the Waitangi Tribunal and for those developing policy for social service delivery.

“I hope something will be done in time to honour those of our people

who helped to achieve this result” (Harawira 2010).

MARGARET MUTU

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## RAPA NUI

The year under review was marked by heavy political upheavals on Rapa Nui that were still unfolding at the time of this writing. A very successful protest action in August 2009 initiated a process of limiting immigration, while a historic change of political leadership in Chile in early 2010 caused a reconfiguration of local politics through the controversial appointment of former Mayor Petero Edmunds as governor. This in turn precipitated a far-reaching and ongoing political crisis.

The review period started rather calmly. On 11–14 July, the French warship *Prairial* visited the Island in order to unload building materials for the establishment of a branch of the Alliance Française, an organization promoting French language and culture abroad, in Hanga Roa. This followed a visit by the French ambassador to Chile earlier in 2009 (French embassy in Chile website, undated article), an act symbolizing the normalization of Franco-Chilean relations regarding Rapa Nui, which was in the French colonial sphere of influence for two decades before being annexed by Chile in 1888.

In mid-July, a controversy arose over planning for the solar eclipse of 11 July 2010, named “Honu Eclipse” on the Island, for which all tourist accommodations were booked out a year in advance (*RNJ*, Oct 2009, 172). Since the event was expected to bring up to 50,000 tourists at one time, local authorities were very

concerned (*ST*, 3 Aug 2009). The polemics about the event increased as a group of Chilean promoters planned a techno dance festival during the eclipse, which gained the support of the Rapa Nui Parliament, the Island's pro-independence body under its president, Leviante Araki; but no government entity authorized it. In a protest letter published online, Cristian Moreno-Pakarati criticized Araki for his support of the event, arguing that tourists would come anyway to see the eclipse and that the planned festival would pose unnecessary risks for the Island's historic monuments (*TRN*, 11 July 2009). After long hesitation, the governor's office finally authorized the festival in May 2010 (*La Tercera*, 8 May 2010).

Even without the possible visitor overkill for the eclipse, the growth of tourism has reached extreme dimensions, with 64,495 visitors in 2008 (*ST*, 25 Aug 2009). This figure (which was then about twelve annual visitors per inhabitant and has been increasing at an annual growth rate of about 20 percent) now constitutes the highest per capita tourism rate in any Pacific Island entity, —more than twice that of Hawai'i, which held that distinction for decades. While many Islanders appreciate the economic benefits of tourism (since, unlike in other mass tourism destinations like Hawai'i and Guam, the visitor industry on Rapa Nui is almost completely in native hands), its recent exponential explosion has made more and more people concerned about its sustainability. Earlier estimates had set the Island's carrying capacity at 20,000 yearly visitors (*di Castri* 2003, 45)—a figure now far surpassed.

Paralleling the visitor count, the number of cars on Rapa Nui is exploding as well: according to estimates, there are now up to four vehicles per inhabitant, which would mean over 19,000 total (*RNJ*, Oct 2009, 173). Though this estimate may seem much too high, there is indeed frequent traffic congestion on the Island, and the density of vehicles in Hanga Roa is certainly extraordinarily high for such a small community.

During 2009, a second bank, Banco Santander, opened in Hanga Roa to compete with the hitherto monopoly-wielding Chilean State Bank (*RNJ*, Oct 2009, 171). While competition may bring more advantages for bank customers, the installation of such outsider-controlled businesses raises concerns among Rapanui who are worried about losing control over the Island's economy.

On 5 August, virtually the entire community gathered at the Hanga Roa stadium to support the aspiring Rapanui national football team, CF Rapa Nui, in what was called by local media the “match of the century” against the popular professional Chilean team Colo-Colo. While CF Rapa Nui unsurprisingly lost the match, it did so with a rather fair score of 0 to 4, a very good showing for an amateur team playing for the first time against professionals (*TRN*, 5 Aug 2009; *RNJ*, Oct 2009, 171–172). More importantly from the point of view of political analysis, the match became a manifestation of an emerging Rapanui national consciousness. When the team as well as the spectators enthusiastically sang the Rapanui national anthem, “I Hē A Hotu Matu'a,” before the start, dozens of Rapanui

flags (but not a single Chilean one) could be seen proudly flying among the audience (YouTube 2009).

While aspirations for more political autonomy, if not independence, are thus clearly on the rise, the organic law bill for a special political status introduced by Chilean President Michelle Bachelet in July 2008, which in its current form is clearly insufficient but would nevertheless represent a small first step in the right direction, was dragging along in Chile's Congress (for an evaluation of the bill, see Gonschor 2009, 172–174). By March 2009 the bill had not even passed in the Chamber of Deputies, let alone in the Senate, and since that time there has been no further action (Congress of the Republic of Chile website, accessed 17 Aug 2010). This incredibly slow legislative process further increased the frustration among Rapanui with the Chilean political system, especially compared with the French legislature, which introduced, debated, and passed a new, albeit controversial, organic law for neighboring French Polynesia within three months in late 2007.

What was most frustrating about the special status bill, however, was the total absence of measures to control immigration of Chilean nationals to the Island. The number of inhabitants has risen dramatically in the last few years, from 3,800 in 2002 to almost 5,000 today (PIR, 18 Aug 2010), and aboriginal Rapanui have not been in the majority since 2006 (RNJ, May 2006, 86). For many years, a large majority of Islanders have been asking the Chilean government to put in place immigration controls like those in Ecuador's Galápagos Islands,

but these requests have been to no avail.

It was not surprising then that more drastic actions of resistance followed. On 17 August, activists of the Rapanui Parliament—led by Levante Araki as well as the two pro-independence members of the Easter Island Development Commission (CODEIPA), Mario Tuki and Raúl Teao—blocked the runway of the Island's international airport with several cars and trucks, preventing flights to and from the Island, in order to protest against the unchecked growth of mass tourism and the ongoing unlimited immigration of Chilean settlers. Araki, Tuki, and Teao demanded that the Chilean government immediately initiate steps to control immigration; otherwise the occupation of the airport would go on (ST, 17 Aug 2000; GIP, 17 Aug 2009). In the event of continuing government inaction, Araki threatened to declare the Island independent. He said there was no problem with tourists as such, but there were big problems with people from the Chilean continent, some of them with criminal records, coming to stay on Rapa Nui (*People's Daily*, 27 Aug 2009).

In a video conference, the activists reached an understanding with Chilean Undersecretary for the Interior Patricio Rosende, and they agreed to end the blockade when Rosende promised to enact measures of immigration control within twenty days. The leaders of the protest planned to fly to Santiago on the next scheduled flight to discuss with him the details of the immigration control regime. A group of women within the group, however, did not agree with the settlement and blocked the runway again in order to

prevent the delegation from leaving, arguing that the undersecretary should come to the Island and not vice versa. Rosende agreed with the request, and after forty hours, the blockade was ended (TRN, Aug 2009).

In the following week, Undersecretary Rosende traveled to Rapa Nui and was presented with a proposed immigration control scheme, which had been elaborated in community workshops prior to his arrival. The government promised to make this proposal into law as soon as possible (GIP, 21 Aug 2009; EMOL, 23 Aug 2009; ST, 25 Aug 2009). The ongoing negotiations about the proposal overlapped with the 121st anniversary of the Island's annexation by Chile on 9 September, which was as usual commemorated by the Chilean government and a few elite Rapanui leaders (*La Nación*, special edition, 25 Sept 2009).

On 15 September the immigration-control system elaborated in the workshops and negotiations was enacted by decree by Undersecretary Rosende. According to the scheme, all visitors to Rapa Nui would be required to fill out a form declaring the duration of and reason for their visit. In a dramatic action, Rosende personally handed the first forms to passengers bound to Rapa Nui at Santiago Airport (TRN, Sept 2009).

However, an unidentified plaintiff filed a judicial complaint against this measure. The Supreme Court of Chile ruled on 7 October that the scheme was unconstitutional, as the constitution guarantees free movement and choice of residence to citizens throughout the national territory (*El Mostrador*, 7 Oct 2009). The gov-

ernment initially complied with the ruling by declaring the filing of the form to be voluntary (ST, 8 Oct 2009), but the possibility of further acts of civil disobedience indicated that this could not be a permanent solution. The government eventually decided to hold a plebiscite on the Island and then amend the Chilean constitution accordingly (TRN, Oct 2009).

Conveniently, on 15 September 2009, Convention 169 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries entered into force in Chile, since Chile had ratified it a year before (Fondo Indígena, 19 Aug 2008; Government of Chile 2008). The application of this convention to Rapa Nui is generally problematic, since the Rapanui are not an indigenous people within an independent country but rather the people of a dependent territory—an important distinction in international law. But in the case of the immigration dilemma, the convention turned out to be indeed helpful. According to the convention: “Special measures shall be adopted as appropriate for safeguarding the persons, institutions, property, labour, cultures and environment of the peoples concerned,” and “governments shall . . . consult the peoples concerned, through appropriate procedures and in particular through their representative institutions, whenever consideration is being given to legislative or administrative measures which may affect them directly” (ILO 1989, articles 4.1 and 6.1a). Thus a referendum limited to ethnic Rapanui concerning the immigration issue could be justified.

In the plebiscite, which took place

on 24 October, an overwhelming majority (96.3 percent of the 706 participants) voted in favor of amending the Chilean constitution to enable immigration controls in Rapa Nui (GIP, 26 Oct, 5 Nov 2009). However, many of the 1,300 eligible voters had chosen not to participate, probably because members of the Parliament had expressed their doubts about the process (EMOL, 24 Oct 2009).

Referring to the referendum results, as well as the precedents in the Ecuadorian Galápagos Islands and the Colombian islands of San Andrés, Providencia, and Santa Catalina (to which Ecuadorian or Columbian citizens, respectively, can migrate only with special permissions), President Bachelet introduced a bill for a constitutional amendment in Congress on 28 October. According to the bill, the Special Territories of Easter Island and Juan Fernández, because of their specific geographic circumstances, would be excepted from the general right of free movement and residence within Chile (Government of Chile 2009; SUBDERE, 6 Nov 2009).

Unsurprisingly, the bill moved very slowly through Congress. Only on 27 July 2010 did the Senate pass it, and now it must go through the Chamber of Deputies. The slow legislative process was again creating frustration, which would lead to more serious unrest later in 2010.

Near the end of 2009, however, attention turned to Chilean national politics as President Bachelet's term in office drew to its end (Chilean law prohibits consecutive terms in office) and the presidential elections became hotly contested. Overall, election results on the island closely matched

the overall results in Chile. In the first round on 13 December, among the two leading candidates, Sebastián Piñera of the right-wing opposition Alianza coalition led the vote with 44.05 percent in Chile and 45.25 percent on Rapa Nui; Eduardo Frei of the hitherto governing center-left Concertación, who had been president from 1994 to 2000, received 29.60 percent on the continent and also came in second on Rapa Nui with 26.05 percent. In the runoff between the leading contenders on 17 January, Piñera won a close race on the continent with 51.60 percent, while on Rapa Nui he received a much higher percentage of the vote (60.19 percent) (Ministry of Interior, Government of Chile).

Concurrently with the first round, national elections were also held for senators and deputies in Congress. For both purposes, Rapa Nui is part of a larger Valparaíso constituency with hundreds of thousands of voters, so the Island's votes are almost irrelevant for these elections. Islanders have often complained about the absence of separate representation for the Island in Congress, but so far to no avail. Congressional elections thus do not usually attract major interest of local politics. Notable, however, was the large number of Islander votes for Senate candidate Joaquín Lavín, due to his personal popularity with many Rapanui, including some of the pro-independence leaders. Nevertheless, Lavín did not win in the wider constituency.

The victory of Piñera, the first right-wing president to be democratically elected in post-Pinochet Chile, marked a historic change for Chile and had important implications for

the political scene on Rapa Nui as well. Ever since the Concertación had started ruling Chile in 1990, the Rapanui elite closely collaborated with it, while the local support for the Alianza has come at least partly from the local opposition of Rapanui nationalists. This seemed at times odd, since one would expect the Chilean right to have less understanding for Rapanui nationalism than the left. However, one should avoid seeing Polynesian political affiliations from Western ideological perspectives, since personal relations are usually far more important than ideology (Pakarati-Novoa 2009, 200)—a situation that parallels attitudes toward metropolitan politics in other Pacific dependent territories such as French Polynesia or Wallis and Futuna.

In this sense, the election results on Rapa Nui not only reflected general trends in Chilean politics (which is certainly an important aspect, since about half of the local voters are Chilean settlers), but the above average vote for Piñera could also be interpreted as a rejection of the local elite affiliated with the Concertación. In particular, the popularity of the two former mayors of Rapa Nui, Petero Edmunds and Alberto Hotus (who claims to be the president of the Rapanui Council of Elders), has been decreasing for some time.

During the transition between Piñera's election and his inauguration, the construction of the new hospital, which had been planned for several years, finally started (GIP, 22 Feb 2010). Shortly thereafter, another referendum under the parameters of ILO Convention 169 solved a long-standing controversy on the Island:

For more than two years, the Italian foundation Mare Nostrum and the French fashion company Louis Vuitton had planned an exhibition featuring a Rapanui mo'ai (megalithic sculpture) in the center of Paris. The project gained the support of the chairman of the Chamber of Tourism, Edgar Hereveri, but many people protested against it, worrying about possible damages to the mo'ai during transport. In a plebiscite organized by the Chilean National Council of Monuments on 1 March, a large majority (89 percent) among the 883 participants rejected the project (CNMC, undated article; Tahitipresse, 9 Apr 2009; *RNJ*, May 2010, 78)—setting a precedent on how to responsibly handle similar projects in the future.

After his inauguration on 11 March, President Piñera appointed new governors for all Chilean provinces (SUBDERE, 17 March 2009). While local representatives of the Alianza had presented Piñera with a list of five Rapanui right-wing politicians to choose from, the president ignored their wishes and instead appointed former Mayor Petero Edmunds to succeed Bachelet-appointed Carolina Hotu as the Island's governor (*RNJ*, May 2010, 75). Since Edmunds is a member of the Concertación, his appointment caused widespread consternation and resentment among both Alianza members in Chile and local representatives of the right-wing coalition such as Amelia Olivares and Julio Araki, who felt betrayed by Piñera's choice (*La Segunda*, 17 March 2010; *ST*, 19 March 2010). Many of them had heavily criticized Edmunds during his fourteen years as mayor from 1994 to 2008, with

charges of corruption and either an overly anti-Chilean or overly pro-Chilean attitude, depending on their individual perspectives (Radio Biobio, 16 March 2010). As an expression of their indignation, activists resigned their Alianza memberships and burned Chilean flags and posters of Piñera in front of the governor's office (*Las Últimas Noticias*, 22 March 2010; *RNJ*, May 2010, 75).

Piñera was unimpressed by the protests and maintained his choice. His appointment of Edmunds might have been a tactical move to tie Edmunds to the new Chilean government and thereby simultaneously split the local elite of Concertación supporters and prevent a possible radicalization of Edmunds. Edmunds, as both a charismatic and an opportunistic local politician, could easily be imagined turning into a pro-independence leader if no longer backed by metropolitan Chile, similar to the French-puppet-turned-Tahitian-nationalist Gaston Flosse in Tahiti. In addition, Piñera probably had no real trust in the local Alianza supporters, since many of them are close to the pro-independence Rapanui Parliament. In the end, however, the move backfired, and the appointment actually provoked a new surge of Rapanui nationalism, as the next months would show.

Since Piñera would not retract Edmunds's appointment, the protests against the governor went on. The demonstrations in front of the governor's office turned into a permanent occupation including tents and placards. Later, representatives of the protestors met with Undersecretary of the Interior Rodrigo Ubilla in Santiago to formally protest Edmunds's

appointment, again to no avail. Among the charges against Edmunds (besides his being from the wrong party) was alleged corruption during his time in office as mayor from 1994 to 2008, including his involvement in controversial investment projects and allegations of fraudulent use of the Island's tax-free status to obtain free licenses for vehicles circulating on the continent (The Clinic, 1 April 2010; *TRN*, June 2010).

By mid-May, the protest had been going on for two months. In an interview with a Chilean newspaper, both Enzo Muñoz (a non-Rapanui member of Alianza who represents the Island in the Regional Council of Valparaíso) and Rapanui Parliament-affiliated CODEIPA member Raúl Teao once again denounced the governor and demanded his resignation (*EMOL*, 13 May 2010). It was also alleged that Edmunds, as current governor, was involved in some land-dealing schemes, and that this might have been part of the deal of his appointment (*La Nación*, 3 Aug 2010; *TRN*, Aug 2010).

As the protest continued, the connections among the protest leaders, with their seemingly different agendas, must be recalled. For example, Julio Araki (one of the leaders of the local Alianza who ran against Edmunds for mayor in 2004 and whom some have considered a candidate to replace Edmunds as governor) is the brother of the president of the Rapanui Parliament, Leviante Araki (*TRN*, Aug 2010). While initially ambiguous, the focus of the anti-Edmunds protest gradually shifted from that of Chilean right-wingers objecting to the appointment of a governor from an opposing

party to a Rapanui nationalist uprising against the Chilean state as a whole, as the protests would later expand to other properties throughout Hanga Roa in late July (TRN, August 2010).

At the same time, Parliament activists came under fire for allegedly damaging a mo'ai while seizing the equipment of a team of archaeologists who were conducting research on the statue, apparently without community approval. Parliament denied the accusations and said it was the archeologists who caused the damage (EMOL, 11 May 2010; TRN, June 2010).

In June, the stalemate between Governor Edmunds and the protestors had still not been resolved. On the contrary, his opponents were increasingly and vociferously demanding not simply his resignation but also independence for the Island from Chile, while both Edmunds and the Piñera government remained stubborn. Meanwhile, the Riroroko family, preferring not to get involved in the controversy, canceled the annual commemoration of their ancestor, the Island's last king, Riro Kāinga, who was assassinated in the 1890s for his anti-colonial resistance and whose remains have rested since 2006 in a monument bearing his bust in the center of the park where the protests were taking place (TRN, June 2010).

The period under review ended with people both excitedly and anxiously waiting for the event of the year, the first full solar eclipse on the Island for more than a thousand years (and the anticipated record visitor arrivals). Meanwhile, political tensions were continuously increasing between the Chilean State and Governor Edmunds on one side and their local

opponents on the other. By August 2010 these tensions would lead to one of the most serious political crises on Rapa Nui in the contemporary era.

LORENZ GONSCHOR

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