

the cameras it was towed for a week by a government ship) to Moruroa to protest the French bomb tests. It was a very successful public relations exercise, as when it arrived at Moruroa, international media focused on it as the only canoe in a flotilla of yachts and motorboats. It remained for a day before sailing home. The tests were condemned in the Cook Islands, but the government's disapproval was low-key because of past favors from France, which had indicated that after the tests its aid to the Pacific would increase, especially to countries that did not cause too much bother during the tests.

The Cook Islands has slowly expanded its diplomatic ties. Beginning with New Zealand and Australia and other South Pacific Forum nations, it later added the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, China, South Korea, Malaysia, the United States, and Canada to the list. This year it added South Africa, Portugal, and Iran, with others "in the pipeline." The intended political highlight of the year—joining the United Nations—was not pursued, not even publicly announced, as the funds needed for UN membership and representation were exhausted.

It was a year of excitement and disillusionment, and for many who left or wanted to but couldn't, of despair. The constitution remains a constraint, for it ties political power to tiny electorates in which the temptation to buy each vote individually is extreme. There is no national electorate. And some entrenched corruption and abuse of power will not be easy to eradicate. Yet there were rays of inspiration. We hope that the current restructuring will

leave the Cook Islands with a stronger economy, a cleaner government, and a more confident people.

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FRENCH POLYNESIA

The French resumption of nuclear testing in the Pacific continued to dominate territorial politics in the latter half of 1995. A clear divide emerged between the pro-independence movement and nongovernment organizations that campaigned against the tests, and the Tahoeraa government, which pragmatically sought economic and political concessions from Paris in return for its support of the testing policy. Although France announced a permanent cessation of testing at the end of January, Tahitian politics continued to be polarized. The split was confirmed in the May territorial elections when the loyalist Tahoeraa won the lion's share of the votes but the pro-independence Tavini made surprising gains and garnered most of the remaining seats.

After unprecedented demonstrations in June 1995, antinuclear protests gathered momentum, spurred on by regional and international support. The *Rainbow Warrior II*'s highly publicized foray into the exclusion zone at Moruroa in July boosted the anti-testing campaign's profile. Thanks to dramatic satellite television footage, France was criticized worldwide for what was perceived as an excessive use of force by French commandos who stormed the Greenpeace ship and arrested its unarmed crew. This event was the watershed for an extension of the anti-testing campaign from the South Pacific to Europe.

Tahitian President Gaston Flosse and his government exerted enormous energy to allay fears about the underground test program's impact on health and the environment. In a major publicity stunt in July, Flosse and his entire cabinet made a three-day visit to Moruroa where they inspected the sites, ate local fish and coconuts, and swam in the lagoon in an effort to demonstrate that the environment was safe. This exercise was repeated in August for the benefit of twenty-one Polynesian mayors. On the regional front, Flosse led delegations to Pacific Island nations to explain the test policy and the program's safety record. He also made offers of development aid on behalf of France, which some nations, such as Tonga, accepted.

Fears that a test resumption would prompt a regional boycott of the Tenth Pacific Games hosted by Tahiti in August proved unfounded. Although pro-independence leader Oscar Temaru had advocated such a boycott, all but three South Pacific Forum

countries opted to participate in the games. Despite veiled threats by some antinuclear activists that the safety of athletes could not be guaranteed, the games proceeded without any violent incidents. Rather than punishing the territory for a policy beyond its control, the Forum focused its anti-testing campaign against the government in metropolitan France.

Antinuclear sentiment within the territory reached fever pitch in the lead-up to the first test on 5 September. The following day riots erupted in Tahiti, ostensibly in reaction to the test. The trouble began when some thirty Maohi women engaged in an antinuclear sit-in on the runway at Faaa airport, and French police tried to forcefully remove them. At the time, members of the A Tia I Mua trade union were holding a rally to drum up support for a general strike to raise the basic wage. When they became aware of the women's predicament, a hard core of militant unionists proceeded to the airport to intervene. Faced with a large and angry crowd of Maohi men, the police began to fire tear gas into the melee. The confrontation between protesters and police quickly descended into violence.

Scores of disaffected youth from the poor suburb of Faaa were alerted and soon joined the fracas at the airport. Altogether several hundred local men ran amok. They set fire to the airport building and incinerated over a hundred cars in the parking lot. The battle at the airport raged all day long. In the evening the mob moved on to torch and pillage shops in downtown Pape'ete. Looters were unobstructed as security forces had concentrated on

regaining control of the airport and protecting government buildings. A small number of rioters continued their destructive activities until the evening of the next day, when appeals by Oscar Temaru finally brought an end to the rampage. The total cost of damage to the airport and town center was approximately A\$51 million.

Accusations abounded as political leaders sought to lay blame for the riots. The general tendency was to hold the French state responsible for being inadequately prepared for the social unrest that was likely to accompany the test series. The French high commissioner's professed surprise at the riots was widely decried as naive in view of the volatile atmosphere prevailing in the capital before the first test. Both the French and territorial governments maintained that the presence of foreign media and antinuclear activists had contributed to the tensions that provoked the riot.

The Tahoeraa government and local media targeted Temaru and A Tia I Mua trade union leader Hiro Tefaarere as the protagonists behind the riots. Tefaarere was implicated directly as he was present when the clashes at the airport began. He went underground but was arrested and charged by police a few days later. Moreover, a large number of participants in the riots were A Tia I Mua members and Tavini Party youth. Tavini youth had been drawn to the fray by reports from the pro-independence Radio Tefana. In June, three employees of the radio station received heavy fines from the court for their part in inciting unrest.

Both A Tia I Mua and Tavini denied that they had encouraged their mem-

bers to riot. Certainly Temaru has long advocated democratic and nonviolent methods to achieve his party's goals. In addition, he was instrumental in calming the agitated youth. It was also clear that only a few hundred individuals engaged in the violence, and they could scarcely be taken to represent the independence movement as a whole.

Despite disavowals of involvement by the proponents of independence, the western media and regional governments tended to portray the rioters as antinuclear and anticolonial crusaders.

A more likely explanation for the riots was that they reflected deepening tensions in Tahitian society. Riots in 1987 and 1991 were ignited, not by anti-French sentiment, but by industrial unrest and attempts by the territorial government to increase taxes.

Rioters have been mainly young, unemployed Maohi men disillusioned with their place in society. Many do appear to be followers of Temaru but are not under his control. In October, the French minister for overseas territories acknowledged that a social crisis engendered by inequality had caused the riots. Unless policies are devised to reduce social inequality, especially rising unemployment among Maohi, there is likely to be further unrest. However, the immediate outlook for social and economic development looks decidedly mixed.

French Polynesia's economy experienced a downturn as a result of international condemnation of the nuclear test series. The hardest hit sector was tourism, which is the territory's main source of foreign exchange after French aid. In 1995, territorial authorities were confident of achieving an all-

time annual record of 200,000 tourists. By mid-year this goal was well within reach, but ultimately was not realized as a result of the hostile international reaction to nuclear testing. The test resumption, along with saturation coverage by the international media of antinuclear protests and the September riots, caused tourists to stay away in droves. Despite the cessation of testing, and a concerted publicity campaign by the territorial government to woo back the tourists, the sector will take a long time to recover.

The closure of the test center revived perennial concerns over how the territory would make up for the sudden shortfall in income and employment. In recognition of the territory's economic difficulties, and to deflect foreign criticism of the French presence in Tahiti, President Chirac promised annual financial aid to the territory to the tune of 990 million French francs (A\$243 million) for another ten years. This sum is in addition to recurrent expenditure by the French state and funds already committed under the terms of the ten-year development plan agreed in January 1994.

The final test series provided a welcome chance for the territorial government to extract new political concessions from France. No sooner had the test resumption been announced than President Flosse began to press for reforms to the statute of internal autonomy, which governs the territory's relationship with France. Flosse realized that several factors were operating in favor of his plan to secure greater autonomy for the territory.

Since its inception, Flosse's Tahoe-

raa Party has been allied with the *Rassemblement Pour la Republique*, which by March 1995 controlled both the parliament and presidency in France. Moreover, Tahoeraa had lobbied earnestly on behalf of Chirac during the presidential election campaign and went to great lengths to justify the nuclear test resumption, both locally and within the region. The Tahoeraa government expected a *quid pro quo* for the loyalty demonstrated to its metropolitan allies. France for its part was keen to keep the territorial government on side, particularly as it was experiencing international isolation as a nuclear pariah.

For months, Flosse and his aides worked behind the scenes in negotiations with state authorities to reform the statute. The Territorial Assembly then adopted its version of the revised statute in November and forwarded it to Paris for approval. It constituted an ambitious wish-list, parts of which France agreed to, while other demands were deemed politically unacceptable or incompatible with the French constitution. Both the National Assembly and the Senate made amendments, but the revised statute was later subjected to further amendments by the Constitutional Council before it entered into force on 23 April.

Aspects of the original draft to be rejected included a request to elevate the Tahitian language to equal status with French. The territory renewed a long-standing demand to exercise complete control over immigration, but obtained a lesser power in its stead, the right to issue work permits to foreigners. A proposal to institute a territorial audio-visual council to regulate televi-

sion and radio transmissions was also refused. Other claims by the territory to assume control over areas such as the criminal code, the oversight of public freedoms, the licensing of private associations, and the regulation of land and property transactions were similarly denied.

The most significant reform to the statute was that France relinquished to the territory control over exploitation of marine resources in the exclusive economic zone. In theory the state retains sovereign rights over the zone, but in practice the territory has unfettered freedom to exploit the five-million-square-kilometer zone, provided France's international treaty obligations are respected. Another advance was a clearer specification of the territory's powers in areas where France may not intervene or retrospectively annul legislation, which had often been a cause for conflict between the state and the territory in the past.

One statutory change that provoked controversy in the territory involved a substantial expansion in presidential powers. For example, the president was given the power to approve government contracts, public service appointments, and to authorize the official journal. Critics were concerned about the greater opportunities for corruption if too much power were concentrated in the hands of one individual. Another controversial measure removed the limit on the number of ministers the president could appoint to his cabinet. This too was perceived as potentially increasing the scope for political patronage, not to mention considerably increasing the cost of government.

In view of political developments over the preceding year it was difficult to predict the outcome of the territorial elections held in May. It was widely expected that Tahoeraa would retain government through its strong performance in the June 1995 municipal elections and its demonstrated ability to obtain economic and political concessions from Paris. However, its unpopular stance in supporting the final series of nuclear tests could have alienated support. Conversely, the pro-independence party, Tavini, had capitalized on the strength of internal and external opposition to the tests and received unprecedented publicity for its cause. But with the permanent closure of the test center more than three months before the poll, residual resentment against France over the nuclear tests could not be relied on to boost Tavini's fortunes on polling day.

As in the past, this election campaign was remarkable for the paucity of coherent or detailed policies offered by the political parties. The virtues of independence versus autonomy and the state of the economy were the main topics on the agenda, but even these key issues did not provoke a significant policy debate. The Tahoeraa Party focused on its record in government and its good relations with France, and employed scare tactics over the perils of putting another party in government. In the absence of nuclear testing, Tavini sought alternative nationalist symbols to attract support for independence. One such issue was the long-standing grassroots campaign to prevent the Meridien chain from building a hotel at Rivnac in an outer suburb of Tahiti. Nationalists have decried the

project as a desecration because the construction site is on an ancient Maohi burial ground.

The elections not only confirmed Tahoeraa's status as the dominant party in the territory, but gave it an absolute majority with 22 of the 41 seats in the Territorial Assembly. Yet this victory was not achieved at the expense of the independence movement. Tavini more than doubled its share of territorial councilors from 4 to 10 seats. Soon after the elections, Tavini's representation rose to 11 seats with the addition of an independent. The only other party to gain meaningful representation was Emile Vernaudon's Ai'a Api, which held on to the 5 seats it had won in the last elections in 1991. Once again, Ai'a Api opted to join in a coalition government with Tahoeraa.

The main casualty at the poll was Here Ai'a. Once the foremost autonomist party in the territory, Here Ai'a had been debilitated by poor leadership under Jean Juventin and factional in-fighting. New leader Tony Hiro revised the party platform and contested the elections under the banner of Alliance 2000, but won only one seat in the Austral Islands. The remaining seats went to Boris Léontieff, an independent but conservative voice; Tinomana Ebb, nominally in favor of independence but also an ally of Flosse; and Lucien Kimitete, who won on a platform that the Marquesas should stay within the French Republic in the event that Tahiti gains independence.

The strength of Tahoeraa's win can in part be attributed to the electoral system in French Polynesia, which

favours the outer islands. These sparsely populated electoral districts may need only several hundred votes to elect a representative to the assembly. In the urban areas, where support for independence is the strongest, over 2000 votes are necessary to acquire a seat. The densely populated Windward Islands comprise 74 percent of the population but account for only 54 percent of the seats in the assembly. Tahoeraa thus concentrated its campaign in the other largely conservative archipelagos, which have exhibited most loyalty to France. As the incumbent government, the party was able to tour the outer islands and distribute largesse before the elections.

The electoral gains by Tavini demonstrate a groundswell in support for independence that can no longer be confused with the antinuclear vote. This trend was most marked in Tahiti, where poor urban Maohi are less convinced of the benefits derived from remaining with France. In this election the party also benefited from greater pragmatism in building alliances with individuals who could attract votes. This collaboration was in part a consequence of links forged during the anti-testing campaign in 1995.

A notable addition to Tavini's list was Jacqui Drollet, hitherto leader of Ia Mana, the main party competing with Tavini for the independence vote in previous elections. Temaru and Drollet thus finally put aside their ideological and personal differences to further the campaign for independence. Hiro Tefaarere, who was leader of the territory's largest trade union, A Tia I Mua, until his implication in the riots, also joined Tavini's team. A sur-

prising convert to the nationalist cause was former Territorial President Alexandre Léontieff who, until recently, had been a staunch opponent of independence. Drollet and Léontieff, whose respective parties appeared to be in irreversible decline, no doubt judged that their only chance of reelection was to join forces with Tavini.

The independence movement has cause to celebrate its gains in the 1996 elections, which were far better than anticipated. The extent of this increase was especially surprising given that French testing had been officially terminated in January, after which France signed the protocols to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone treaty in March. For thirty years nuclear testing had constituted a focus for territorial nationalists in their campaign against the French presence. In the absence of this powerful and evocative symbol the Tavini Party not only maintained, but significantly increased, its level of support. Nevertheless, in the short term, prospects for advancing the independence cause are limited in view of the size of the loyalist Tahoeraa's win and of France's commitment to continue providing high levels of financial assistance.

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MĀORI ISSUES

Ongoing tension between government and Māori over unsatisfactory progress in settling Māori claims continued to dominate the Māori political scene. By September 1995 both sides had become entrenched. Paramount chief of a central North Island tribe Sir

Hepi Te Heuheu had called two national *hui*, both of which were attended by over a thousand Māori from across the political spectrum and from a full range of tribal and pan-tribal bodies. Despite a wide range of opinion, there was consensus that constitutional change was required in order to give appropriate recognition to and status for the Treaty of Waitangi. Since the signing of the treaty in 1840, Māori have sought to ensure that the guarantee of *tino rangatiratanga*, or Māori sovereignty or autonomy, is upheld. Denial of this guarantee by successive New Zealand governments, including the present one, has ensured that Māori have been unable to fully participate in New Zealand society.

In order to advance the debate on constitutional change, the national Māori forum established working parties. Māori from a wide range of political and intellectual backgrounds pooled their energies and expertise to help develop robust strategies aimed at enabling Māori to regain control of their own lives. When the working parties reported back in January 1996, the third national Māori *hui* resolved to mount an extensive education program for Māori around the country to prepare them for constitutional change.

Meanwhile Prime Minister Jim Bolger was declaring that no one, including Māori, really knew what Māori sovereignty or *tino rangatiratanga* was, and he refused to enter into, or even permit, any discussion on the matter. He confidently asserted that the sovereignty of the New Zealand parliament is, and will always