

At a time of dramatic change in global strategic and economic structures, it might be expected that the important international issues and events of concern to the Pacific Islands in 1992 occurred outside, rather than inside, the region. The list of potentially significant developments was endless: the continuing strategic shakeout after the end of the Cold War; the withdrawal of the United States military from the Philippines; moves toward free trade areas in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and North America (North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA); developments in Asia-Pacific economic cooperation; increased pessimism over the outcome of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT); changes within the European Community; and continuing recession in the West. These developments, far from determining affairs in the Pacific, formed only one element in a more complex equation. As in the past, developments in regional relations, and in relations between the region and the outside world, derived as much from political and social change within island societies as from outside factors.

#### CHANGING GLOBAL CONTEXT

One striking reflection of the changing global strategic context was the declining interest in the region by Russia, which during the year closed its embassy in Port Moresby—its only diplomatic presence in the region. The effect was negligible, because the Soviet Union, and subsequently Rus-

sia, had not been involved economically or diplomatically in the islands to any significant degree. The only exceptions were the one-off fisheries agreements with Kiribati and Vanuatu, which were discontinued for economic reasons before the end of the Cold War.

The more interesting involvement to watch was that of Western countries on whose economic assistance the island states depend. According to conventional wisdom, such aid is in danger of falling below its Cold War levels now that strategic concerns are no longer present, and as aid funds are diverted to the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (see eg, Herr 1993; Elek 1992, 2; Callick 1991). Developments in 1992 support the view that the Pacific Islands no longer grab the attention they did during the Cold War, when foreign leaders frequently visited island capitals, and political developments in the islands could be front-page news in Paris, Canberra, Washington, and London. Nevertheless, outside powers retained an interest in influencing island affairs. In this sense it is “business as usual,” except the business is now generally handled by desk officers rather than foreign ministers. No reduction in economic assistance to the region is evident. Even New Zealand, whose economic stringency has dictated a 3 percent reduction in the total aid budget for 1992–93, will slightly increase its assistance to the Pacific Islands (McKinnon 1992).

French involvement was no exception to this general trend. France’s

commitment to influencing regional affairs seemed unaffected by the end of the Cold War. A policy of integrating French territories into regional affairs, financially supporting various regional programs, and cultivating a less confrontational image was pursued vigorously and with considerable success. However, the end of the Cold War did create the necessary conditions for a dramatic departure in French nuclear-testing policy. In April, the socialist government in Paris suspended testing at Moruroa and in January 1993 announced that the suspension would continue as long as the other major nuclear powers did not resume their tests. This decision, greeted with great enthusiasm in the Pacific (except in the test-dependent economy of Pape'ete), was made for domestic political reasons (Mitterrand's socialists were losing ground to the French greens). Although it is not therefore to be seen as a response to the end of East-West rivalry, it was a policy shift that would have been unimaginable without such change.

The United States renewed its fisheries treaty with the Forum island states, guaranteeing payment of US\$180 million over the next ten years. The earlier treaty was widely interpreted as a product of US Cold War concerns, an attempt to alter the image that the United States was riding roughshod over island economic interests while the Soviet Union was willing to pay for fishing access. The new treaty is an interesting signal of a continuing commitment after the end of the Cold War. The United States also moved to activate the Joint Commercial Commission with the Pacific

Islands, which, despite teething problems, aims to promote American investment in the region and greater access for island products to the United States market. It will be based at the East-West Center in Hawai'i, and will be responsible to the Pacific Islands Conference, the governing body of the Pacific Islands Development Program. On the Pacific rim, the withdrawal of the United States military from Clark Field and Subic Bay in the Philippines does not reflect a reduction of strategic interest in the area. The United States moved during the year to develop a more flexible and mobile approach to its Pacific presence, focusing on access for its ships and planes and pre-positioned materiel in Southeast Asia, and building up support bases on Guam (*JDW*, 12 Dec 1992, 40).

China and Taiwan continued to spar for the allegiance of Pacific Island states. In a move that greatly angered Beijing, the Honiara meeting of the South Pacific Forum in July agreed to institute a regular dialogue with Taiwan. This decision reflected the increasing support for Taiwan among island states, with Nauru, Tonga, and Solomon Islands having already formally recognized Taiwan. Others, such as Fiji and Papua New Guinea, have close informal relations. The new Vanuatu government, although not yet granting formal recognition—notwithstanding a statement by Foreign Minister Serge Vohor to the contrary—moved much closer to Taipei than its predecessor. In August, for example, Taiwan sponsored Prime Minister Maxime Carlot Korman's trip to Budapest to attend a meeting of the World Anti-Communist League.

The changing global trading regime and the increasing regionalization of approaches to economic matters caught the attention of Pacific Island policymakers during the year. They were generally keen to be part of any Asia-Pacific regional developments, to take action to mitigate the effects on their current trade of the move to lower tariffs in Australia (which will dilute the margin of preference for island products under the South Pacific Regional Trade and Commercial Agreement), and to consider the possible impact of free trade area developments in ASEAN and North America, and of a single integrated market in Europe. More generally, they were concerned, as were other trade-dependent small players outside major blocs, with the discussions in GATT which suggested that world trade might move toward more, rather than less, protectionism. But none of these developments affected Pacific Islands trade in 1992. It is simply too early to say what impact they might have.

Other factors may have more deleterious effects on the export-dependent future now being mapped for island economies. A central concern will be how to remain competitive with production in China and Southeast Asia. At what point will the off-shore capital attracted to island export zones move on to Asian countries? The opening to the world market of mineral resources in the former Soviet Union may have implications for the attractiveness of exploiting the resources of Papua New Guinea, especially if that might involve such difficulties as have been experienced in Bougainville.

## REGIONAL RELATIONS

The institutional framework within which multilateral relations are conducted appears to have received further endorsement during 1992. There is a rough division of labor between the South Pacific Commission (SPC), the Pacific Islands' Development Program, the University of the South Pacific, the Forum Fisheries Agency, the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP), and the Forum Secretariat. Their respective efforts are harmonized through a South Pacific Organizations Coordinating Committee. Far from being affected by a post-Cold War redirection of funds, this network continued to attract sufficient financial assistance for moderate growth. The coordination committee also took bolder steps to rationalize regional strategies and appeared to gain more legitimacy as the hub of the regional institutional network.

The increased acceptance of these arrangements was reflected in the absence from regional debate of any significant support for the alternative approaches that had dominated deliberations for at least a decade: the possibility of merging the South Pacific Commission with the Forum, or of strengthening the commission to the point of competing with the Forum network in some of the same functional areas.

The most significant institutional development was the successful establishment of the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme in Apia despite the constraints imposed by

the severe impact of Cyclone Val on Western Samoa, and the inordinate demands posed by preparations for the region's participation in June in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio. The environmental program began the year as a unit in SPC headquarters in Noumea; by December it was installed in Apia as a distinct regional institution with about forty staff. Its budget in 1992 was US\$7 million compared with US\$1.5 million in 1990 (SPREP 1992). The legal changes necessary to establish its autonomy were delayed by the United States Government's concern about the implications of allowing its territories to become signatories to a SPREP treaty. This issue remains unresolved.

A second development of some significance was the institutionalization of the relatively new interest in promoting joint action on drug trafficking and criminal activities in the region. A Regional Security Committee, comprising senior officials from Forum member countries, met for the first time in Suva in February. The committee will act as a focal point for the activities of various existing regional networks—the South Pacific Chiefs of Police Conference, the Customs Heads of Administration Regional Meeting, and the Pacific Islands Law Officers Meeting—each of which may send representatives as observers (Barber 1992). The results of the Suva meeting were taken up by Pacific leaders at the Honiara meeting of the Forum in the form of a Declaration on Law Enforcement Cooperation, covering such matters as drug trafficking, intrusions by

foreign criminals, money laundering, terrorism, and extradition (SPF 1992).

The third major institutional development in 1992 was the formation of a grouping of Smaller Island States, comprising Cook Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Nauru, and Niue. The outcome of the first summit meeting of prime ministers and presidents, held in Rarotonga in January, suggests that the group intends a fairly radical departure from existing regional programs. The leaders proposed the establishment of their own regional development bank, joint negotiations with distant-water fishing nations and international shipping companies over access to their combined exclusive economic zones, examination of the possibility of imposing fees on the use of their airspace, entering a consortium for international investment, and sharing technologies such as black-pearl farming (*PR*, 6 Feb 1992, 4). A committee of officials of the Smaller Island States subsequently met in Tarawa to take these ideas further and the group caucused in Honiara in July prior to the Forum meeting.

Even if the particular proposals for collaboration within the SIS group fail to eventuate—and the lack of action on equally ambitious statements of intent in the case of other subregional groupings is not encouraging—the Smaller Island States have the potential to at least equal the impact of the Melanesian Spearhead Group as a lobby within the Forum. Although some reservations were raised in Honiara about the implications for regional unity of the new subgrouping, the Forum meeting nevertheless endorsed the development of the group and directed the

Secretariat to assist where possible. Furthermore, the Pacific Islands Development Program offered to fund a meeting for the private sectors of the five SIS members, and the South Pacific Organizations Coordinating Committee urged that Smaller Island States be regarded as a legitimate category for the purposes of regional programs.

Robert Rex's farewell speech to the Honiara Forum marked the end of an era in regional relations—a passing from the scene of those of the older generation of island politicians who had first met at South Pacific Conferences sometime between 1950 and the 1960s, who had formed the Pacific Islands Producers' Association in 1965, and the Forum and its offshoot, the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation in the early 1970s, and who had continued to hold power in their countries until recently. The end of this era was underlined by the deaths of Hammer DeRoburt in July (President of Nauru in all but a few of the last twenty-five years), and of Robert Rex in December (premier of Niue for the nineteen years since self-government); the departure of Ratu Mara from the prime ministership of Fiji in May (after twenty-five years of national and regional leadership); the end of Prince Tuipelehake's twenty-two-year term as Tonga's prime minister; and Governor Coleman's loss of power in American Samoa.

Leadership in the region has now passed to a different generation in their late forties rather than sixties and seventies. Also missing at the regional table in 1992 were some key players in the second generation of leaders: Walter Lini after twelve years as prime

minister of Vanuatu, and Jeremia Tabai after thirteen years as president of Kiribati (although Tabai has returned in a new role as Secretary-General of the Forum Secretariat). Most leaders attending regional meetings in 1992 had only attended a few meetings; for many—notably Maxime Carlot Korman of Vanuatu and Sitiveni Rabuka of Fiji—it was their first direct involvement.

The structure of regional relations was particularly affected by political change within Vanuatu and Fiji. For twelve years Vanuatu, under Walter Lini's prime ministership, had represented the radical end of regional politics as the most antinuclear and the most anti-French of island countries. The dramatic change to a franco-phone-dominated coalition government in Vila could have implications for the Melanesian Spearhead Group, for whom New Caledonian independence is a rallying point, and for the Forum and its political positions. The marked difference that a francophone administration represents for regional politics was symbolized in Carlot Korman's request that Forum deliberations henceforth be in French and English. Political developments in Fiji had a similar set of implications. Fiji was the most important player in regional affairs from the late 1960s until the coups in 1987. Preoccupied at home and having fallen out with Australia and New Zealand, it had a very low-key role from 1988 to 1991. The first postcoup election, the acceptance of the constitutional changes by Australia and New Zealand, and Rabuka's successful debut at the Honiara Forum, suggest that Fiji is in a position to again

take its place among the more influential states in regional politics.

The politics of regional relations within the South Pacific Commission focused on housekeeping issues—the selection of key officers including the secretary-general, the siting of new headquarters, and financial management and accountability—leaving little time to debate development problems or programs. The culmination of the debate on the site of the headquarters, which occupied much of the 1991 South Pacific Conference in Nuku'alofa (see Fry 1992), came at a special ministerial meeting at Noumea in March. Asked to leave their Anse Vata headquarters of forty-five years (formerly the American headquarters during World War II) to make way for tourism development, commission members had to choose among five proposed sites: Noumea, Suva, Nuku'alofa, Vila, and Pape'ete. When they failed to reach a consensus after two days of debate, the Fijian delegate proposed a vote be taken. The Tongan and French Polynesian proposals fell out after the first round; the Noumea site won out over Suva 16 votes to 7 in the second; the Vila proposal was to be considered only in the event of a decision to move from Noumea (*PR*, 26 March 1992, 1–3).

Voting was along the lines established during the heated debate at the 1991 conference and for much the same reasons. The Noumea site was supported by the Melanesian Spearhead countries, most metropolitan countries and territorial administrations, and of course, France and New Caledonia. The members of this highly unusual alliance (it must have been the first time that the Melanesian countries and

France had been on the same side on any issue) were motivated by a variety of factors. The Melanesian countries, the most unlikely supporters given their opposition during the 1970s and 1980s to the headquartering of the commission in Noumea, were responding to FLNKS entreaties to keep it there as an important part of the Kanak people's interaction with other Pacific Islanders. France presumably thought it important to retain it on French soil as part of legitimating the French presence in the region. Others were concerned to continue the long association with Noumea, and that the South Pacific Commission remain independent from the Forum and continue to represent the interests of territorial administrations. The Suva site, on the other hand, was mainly supported by the non-Melanesian independent countries. Their support was motivated by relatively high operating costs in Noumea, anger at the way the commission had been treated by the French administration and the Noumea authorities, and anti-French feeling more generally.

Although Fiji and its supporters were unsuccessful in moving the site away from Noumea, their challenge resulted in the acceptance of a superior site. Before the challenge the French proposal was for a site at Receiving in the suburbs of Noumea. The proposal that was ultimately accepted comprises a beachfront office site at Anse Vata, a block away from the present headquarters, and a separate site at Receiving for housing of commission personnel. The cost of the new headquarters will be met by France (88 percent) and Australia (12 percent). The challenge also

prompted a more generous subsidy of operating costs from the local New Caledonian government. These concessions, which would not have occurred without the intervention by Berenado Vunibobo, then Fiji's minister for trade and commerce, at the Nuku'alofa conference in October 1991, may have gone some way in calming what had become very strong feelings on this issue.

The other housekeeping issues—selecting a new secretary-general and financial management—became intertwined at the South Pacific Conference in Suva in October. Following the tragic death in early March of Secretary-General elect Jacques Lékawé, two names were put forward for consideration: Jioji Kotobalavu, formerly director of the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, and Ati George Sokomanu, former president of Vanuatu. Kotobalavu withdrew at the eleventh hour to take up a position as secretary of the Fiji prime minister's office. In a closed session the conference voted 20 to 6 against an Australian motion to reopen nominations for the position; consequently Sokomanu was appointed (with Poloma Komiti promoted to director of programs and Fusi Caginavanua as deputy director).

For the metropolitan countries the appointment was intimately connected with the financial management of the South Pacific Commission. Australia's delegates in particular were reportedly concerned that given the particular need at this time for improved financial management, the appointment decision be delayed until a broader field could be found. During debate they warned that appropriate management

changes would have to be made or Australia's future extra-budgetary funding to the commission might have to be reviewed. This was a dramatic departure from the low-key approach usually adopted by Australia, and was the first time that any government had threatened withdrawal of funds if its position was not adopted. It probably ensured solid island support for Sokomanu. Australia's stance was interpreted by most island delegates as unacceptable, with their strength of commitment to what they saw as a principle overriding any concern that Australia would carry out its threat.

In an interview with the *Fiji Times* after his appointment, Sokomanu accused Australia of trying to run the South Pacific Commission as a colonial club. He asked, "Do we still need people to bulldoze us around here or let Pacific Islanders do their own thing and show places like Australia and others that they can do the job as well as others?" Sokomanu was later criticized in the conference report for revealing the proceedings of in-camera discussions to the press. Australia was also accused by Papua New Guinea Foreign Minister John Kaputin of bringing its tensions with Vanuatu into regional relations, an accusation dismissed as "absolute nonsense" by Steve Martin, the leader of the Australian delegation (Lakhan 1992).

The collective efforts of the island states on environmental matters during 1992 focused on developing and pushing a regional position within the Association of Small Island States and in the run up to, and during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. After the Rio con-

ference, regional efforts concentrated on developing a climate change program. A strong position was taken on the Johnston Atoll chemical weapon destruction facility, with a demand that it be closed down after the current burn-off. A surprisingly weak position was adopted in relation to the Japanese plutonium shipments, given the concerns of some member states (the strong opposition to the shipments by Nauru's President Dowiyogo was reported on the front page of the *New York Times* in October). The Forum simply urged that appropriate care be taken, and that permission be sought for travel through their economic zones (SPF 1992). Regional programs in areas such as coastal management and biodiversity began to take on some substance with the employment of new resources at SPREP headquarters.

Collective diplomacy in the economic arena focused on developing links with Asia and, reflecting Forum wishes, the new secretary-general made this a priority. In September Tabai addressed a ministerial meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Group (APEC) in Bangkok, the first time the Forum has been granted speaking rights (although still only as an observer). On the basis of this experience, he revealed his intention of encouraging individual island states to send representatives on Forum delegations, or to seek APEC membership in their own right where possible (Garrett 1992a). Tabai also attempted to develop links between ASEAN and the Forum. Finally, the legal regime concerned with controlling the operations of distant-water fishing nations in the Pacific scored with the signing of the

Niue Treaty on Fisheries Surveillance and Law Enforcement (Properjohn 1992). The surveillance regime demonstrated its effectiveness during the year, when nine Korean and Taiwanese boats were suspended from the Regional Register of Foreign Fishing Vessels after being sighted fishing illegally in Nauru's waters. The Taiwan Deep Sea Boatowners and Exporters Association subsequently made a financial settlement (PR, 1 Oct 1992, 1).

#### BILATERAL RELATIONS

In addition to influencing multilateral relations in the region, political changes in Fiji, Vanuatu, and Papua New Guinea held significant implications for various bilateral relationships. Most important was the rapprochement between Fiji and Australia and New Zealand following the first postcoup elections under a new constitution. While both governments had their reservations about vote weighting and other mechanisms favoring one race over another, and one region over another, they accepted this as the best solution possible in the circumstances. They were encouraged in this position by the acceptance of the new constitution, and the participation in the elections, by those parties ousted by the coups: the National Federation Party and the Labour Party. Although the Australian government still talked of accepting the electoral outcome in the context of Rabuka's guarantees of future constitutional revision, some sense of relief that full relations could be resumed with Fiji was evident. Following Rabuka's successful meetings with Prime Ministers Keating and Bolger at the Forum in July, Australia

and New Zealand cleared the way for resumption of defense cooperation. Australia immediately offered three (previously cancelled) patrol boats, and later in the year sent its defense minister to Suva to discuss the terms of the restoration of defense links.

Prime Minister Rabuka's visit to Australia was a diplomatic success. The impression he gave, of a man of moderation who was prepared to consider further reforms of the constitution to make it more democratic, was somewhat tarnished by subsequent publicity given to extreme anti-Indian comments that he allegedly made during a television interview for Australia's Network Ten. It was later revealed, however, that Rabuka had been the victim of blatantly dishonest editing (Garrett 1992*b*). While in the original interview he was clearly saying that the Fiji constitution should be "totally Fijian-oriented," he did not express the more extreme views attributed to him. Using time-honored but ironic diplomatic behavior, both Australia and New Zealand sent warships to Suva Harbour before the end of the year to symbolize the full restoration of friendly relations.

The election of a francophone government in Vanuatu immediately affected Vanuatu's relations with France and New Caledonia and, later in the year, with Australia. Relations between Vanuatu and France had been strained since independence in 1980. The then-governing Vanua'aku Pati saw France as directly and indirectly attempting to thwart the move to independence and as subsequently intervening in the domestic politics of Vanuatu by supporting the francophone parties.

The Vanua'aku Pati also had a special dislike of French settlers in New Caledonia, whom they saw as meddling in Vanuatu's pre-independence and post-independence politics. On the other hand, the French viewed Vanuatu under Walter Lini as the main regional supporter of Kanak independence in New Caledonia. The tensions culminated in 1987 in the expulsion of the French ambassador for the second time. As a consequence in the same year, France suspended all economic assistance to Vanuatu.

The new Carlot Korman government rapidly mended fences with France and New Caledonia, making the first move in January. A ministerial delegation was sent to New Caledonia to hold talks with the three provincial governments. New Caledonia's Territorial Congress voted to give economic assistance to Vanuatu to provide free schooling. (Schooling is very political in Vanuatu, because it is seen as determining the balance of power between francophone and anglophone communities over the long term). New Foreign Minister Vohor indicated during his visit to Noumea that he would also like to see a French embassy and a campus of the French University of the South Pacific in Port Vila. In February the Carlot Korman government asked the French government to assist with the surveillance of its exclusive economic zone (Australia was already offering assistance in this area). In March it was announced that the Vanuatu government would be opening a consulate in Noumea, and the government also moved to complete a property agreement with the French government that would allow both the

return of a French ambassador to Vila and the normalization of relations. In April, Carlot Korman visited Paris (*PR* 23 Jan 1992, 6; 2 Apr 1992, 1,4).

Vanuatu's relations with Australia took a very different turn. Despite an early visit to Vila by Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister Senator Evans, and a successful return visit to Canberra by Carlot Korman, relations became severely strained in July when the Vanuatu government expelled Australia's acting high commissioner, James Pearson, on the grounds that he had interfered in the internal affairs of Vanuatu. Pearson had publicly expressed Australia's concerns about proposed amendments to the Business Licence Act, which would give the finance minister the right to refuse or revoke business licenses without having to give reasons (*PR*, 9 July 1992, 1). In talks with Carlot Korman at the Honiara Forum meeting, Evans said that he regarded Pearson's actions as "ordinary, legitimate, diplomatic behavior." With matters unresolved by the talks, Evans subsequently indicated that the Australian government would cancel the scheduled visit of two Australian warships as part of Vanuatu's Independence Day celebrations and would contemplate a further response. He argued that "when people don't observe the ordinary rules of diplomatic behavior it is necessary to respond in a way that makes clear that's the case" (*PR*, 16 July 1992, 6).

#### THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE BOUGAINVILLE CRISIS

Although it did not appear on any official regional agenda, the most significant international issue in the Pacific

during 1992 was the "spillover effects" of the Bougainville crisis. The tragic events in Bougainville between 1989 and 1991 had already made this the most serious security problem in the region since the Second World War. Despite calls from the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) and its supporters for assistance from the outside world, and concern expressed by international nongovernment groups such as Amnesty International and the Pacific Conference of Churches, the international community had generally regarded this as an internal matter for the Papua New Guinea government. This position was maintained by the Forum states in 1992, but it became increasingly evident that events had moved well beyond a serious internal crisis in Papua New Guinea. By year's end the conflict had severely damaged Papua New Guinea–Solomon Islands relations and Australia–Solomon Islands relations, and called into question the future of the Melanesian Spearhead Group.

At the center of the developing internationalization of the conflict was the deterioration of relations between Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. Although the relationship had been strained since the beginning of the crisis, tensions escalated sharply in 1992. In February, Prime Minister Rabie Namaliu sent a formal protest to Solomon Islands Prime Minister Solomon Mamaloni, accusing his government of allowing its territory to be used by BRA sympathizers "to stage acts of propaganda and sabotage against our sovereignty" (*PR*, 6 Feb 1992, 1). This was largely a response to the entry into Bougainville, through Solomon

Islands, of an Australian who set up a transmitter for Radio Free Bougainville, the establishment of a Bougainville Coordination Office in Honiara, and the rejection by the Solomon Islands government of an extradition treaty proposed by Papua New Guinea.

Relations between Honiara and Port Moresby plummeted after the Papua New Guinea Defence Force in March carried out a cross-border raid on Bomana Bay settlement on Fauro Island, destroying a fuel depot and burning houses. Although Namaliu subsequently apologized and claimed that the raid was not authorized by his government, he also implied that Solomon Islands had some responsibility for its occurrence. Such raids could be avoided, he argued, if Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands cooperated on border surveillance. He added that BRA activities carried out from the Solomons could easily be interpreted as a threat to Papua New Guinea's national sovereignty (*PR*, 26 Mar 1992, 1,4). In response to the raid on Fauro Island, Mamaloni broke all contact with the Namaliu government and announced that he would boycott the Melanesian Spearhead Group—due to meet in Wewak in April—until compensation was received from Papua New Guinea. He would not discuss the issue with Port Moresby until after the Papua New Guinea elections in June (Garrett 1992*c*).

At this point, the Mamaloni government attempted to engage the international community on the issue. Parliamentary delegations toured Pacific Island countries and Papua New Guinea, and visited Commonwealth

and Forum headquarters. The government asked the Commonwealth Secretariat to revive its mediation efforts. In response, the secretary-general of the Commonwealth visited Honiara in May. He is reported to have said that he would ask Commonwealth members to be sympathetic to requests from Solomon Islands for assistance in surveillance of the border with Papua New Guinea (*PR*, 28 May 1992, 4).

The elections in Papua New Guinea raised hopes of reconciliation between the two countries, as Paias Wingti in his election campaign appeared to take a position on Bougainville that was more appealing to Solomon Islands. In the first month after his election as prime minister in July, events moved steadily toward a restoration of relations. Wingti met Mamaloni in Honiara in late July en route to the Melanesian Spearhead Group meeting in Vila. As a result Mamaloni moved to meet Papua New Guinea concerns, withdrawing a Solomon Islands passport issued to a prominent member of the Bougainville Provisional Government, Bishop Zale, which listed his place of residence as "Republic of Bougainville," and agreeing to an official meeting to discuss border surveillance (*PR*, 20 Aug 1992, 6).

This reduction in tensions was short-lived. In mid-September the Papua New Guinea Defence Force again attacked a Solomon Islands settlement—Komaliae village in the Shortland Islands—killing two people, injuring a child, and kidnapping a man (Waq 1992). These unauthorized actions took Papua New Guinea–Solomon Islands relations to rock bottom, with Mamaloni threatening to sever

diplomatic ties and to recognize the BRA and the Republic of Bougainville. He also blamed Australia for its defense involvement with Papua New Guinea, asserting that many Solomon Islanders were "questioning the sincerity" of the Australian government "since it is Australia which is supplying the lethal weapons with which Papua New Guinea forces are killing Bougainvilleans and Solomon Islanders" (Honi-mae 1992, 7). In a further response to the raid, the Mamaloni government submitted a request to the United Nations Security Council that it consider sending a mission to examine the border issue.

Wingti responded quickly to a protest note from Honiara with an apology and a promise of disciplinary action for those involved and compensation for those affected in the Shortlands. But this did not defuse the situation. The Solomons government continued to lobby at the United Nations for a mission to look at the border problem and refused dialogue with Port Moresby. In response to a letter from Stephen Pokawin, premier of the Manus provincial government, requesting that Mamaloni host a meeting of disaffected Papua New Guinea premiers in Honiara, Mamaloni outlined his views on Bougainville and attacked the roles of the Papua New Guinea and Australian governments. He went as far as inviting the premiers to hold a meeting in Honiara to discuss the Wingti government's proposal to dismember Papua New Guinea's provincial government system (*WPR*, 1 Dec 1992, 2; *IBP*, Dec 1992, 11).

By year's end relations between Honiara and Canberra were severely

strained, with Mamaloni cancelling Australian surveillance flights over the Solomon Islands' economic zone and accusing the Australian defense attaché in Honiara of involvement in the PNG Defence Force raid. He also requested the withdrawal of the Australian advisers to the Solomon Islands police force. At the international level, the United Nations, although initially reluctant to consider the matter, finally sent a mission to Honiara. The parliamentary opposition in Honiara generally agreed with Mamaloni's concerns over Papua New Guinea's handling of the Bougainville crisis, and the consequent intervention of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force in Solomon Islands territory, as well as the need to seek international assistance with mediation on the border dispute, but they parted ways on the question of Mamaloni's response to Australia and his refusal to hold talks with the Papua New Guinea government.

The tensions between Honiara and Port Moresby in 1992 marked a departure in the post-independence relations of Pacific Island states. This was the first time such a fundamental rift had developed between two island countries. It was also the first time an island state had thought another to be infringing its sovereignty. In this case, of course, each thought the other was threatening its sovereignty. Honiara accused Papua New Guinea of having no respect for its border or its citizens by allowing its defense force to harass Solomon Islanders in cross-border raids. Port Moresby accused the Solomon Islands government of allowing its territory to be used as a base and conduit for assistance to a group rebelling

against the authority of the Papua New Guinea government. The terms of the dispute over contending sovereignties had a familiar and ironic ring: that of Indonesia–Papua New Guinea relations from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, with Jakarta claiming that the Papua New Guinea government was allowing its territory to be used by West Papuan separatists, and Port Moresby concerned about Indonesian military incursions into Papua New Guinea territory.

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