

labor strikes rose to 25,010 in 1993, compared to 19,368 in 1992. This number reflected not only the usual workplace friction, but growing sentiments that political peace has received more attention than social progress in recent years, and that the economic benefits generated in part by the Matignon Accords have not been fairly distributed.

On the regional level, New Caledonia continued to cultivate and improve its relationships with other Pacific countries, particularly Vanuatu. In April, Vanuatu's prime minister came to Noumea to open a new consulate. In November, New Caledonia and Vanuatu signed a cooperation agreement complementing the one signed in July between Vanuatu and the French Republic. Vanuatu's new attitude toward the New Caledonian independence movement was also apparent. While the former government in Port Vila was vocal in its support of the struggle for independence, current Prime Minister Maxime Carlot Korman has declined to get involved in New Caledonia's internal affairs. At the end of his official visit to the territory, Carlot Korman stated that his position was purely one of support for the Matignon Accords.

FRANÇOIS SODTER

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

At the beginning of 1993, the government of Paias Wingti appeared well placed to implement some of the ambitious reforms announced after it came to power in mid-1992. The coalition commanded a comfortable majority in

Parliament, and had successfully introduced several significant reform measures during its first six months in office. More important, its eighteen-month grace period of immunity from parliamentary votes of no confidence still had twelve months to run. In September 1993 Wingti engineered a stunning parliamentary coup that extended this immunity to early 1995. Nevertheless, and with some notable exceptions, the government had difficulty implementing its policies in 1993. By year's end, with several major initiatives in disarray, it appeared unlikely that Wingti could deliver the sort of comprehensive and fundamental reform he had promised.

The Wingti government did have some remarkable successes during the year, particularly in its dealings with the transnational companies operating in Papua New Guinea's rich mineral and petroleum sectors. The extremely high rates of economic growth in recent years (11.8 percent in 1992 and an expected 14.4 percent in 1993) are mainly attributable to developments in these sectors, and Wingti came to power determined to capture a larger share of the benefits for Papua New Guineans. In January 1993 the International Monetary Fund was commissioned to review the fiscal regime for mining, petroleum, and gas. By that time, however, Wingti's high-stakes struggle with the mining companies was well under way.

At the beginning of the year, negotiations with the partners in the Porgera Joint Venture over an increased equity share for the state were deadlocked. In 1992, the government had demanded to increase its share in the giant gold mine

from 10 percent to 30 percent, claiming that the mine's operator, Placer Pacific, had deliberately downplayed the project's financial potential when the mining agreement was signed. Although the government claimed the negotiations were purely commercial in nature, the international financial community reacted with suspicion. One analyst described the impact of Wingti's aggressive actions at Porgera and elsewhere in the mining sector as "nothing short of devastating." He estimated that the market value of Papua New Guinea-related mining and oil stocks had declined by 22 percent since the Wingti government came to power (Davis 1993, 24).

Fearing that a false step could put their billion-dollar investment at risk, the joint venture partners were obliged to negotiate the sale of equity. As Managing Director Vic Botts of Placer Pacific put it, "We did not think it was good business to confront the Government" (*PC*, 18 Aug 1993, 2). By early 1993, their main concern was the extent of the concessions necessary to restore a more favorable political environment.

The deal finalized in March represented a major victory for the government. It allowed the state to purchase an additional 15 percent equity in the joint venture (5 percent from each of the three corporate partners) for 138,750,000 kina, significantly lower than the estimated market value of the shares. More important, payment would come from the state's new share of the cash flow, making the investment virtually risk free. No interest was payable until the principal had been fully paid off. If the mine were to

cease production before that time, the transaction would be interest free. Revenues from taxation were unaffected by the arrangement, and the state would get a share of dividend income. Furthermore, the partners agreed to finance and implement a 50-million-kina infrastructure development program in Enga, Southern Highlands, and Western Highlands provinces over the next decade, in return for tax credits (Iangalio 1993).

As Mark Davis pointed out, the costs of the deal to the three private partners, Placer Pacific, Renison Goldfields Consolidated, and Highlands Gold were significant, but "not as high as they might have been." The agreement protects the companies' cash flows until the state's debt is paid off, and offers intrinsic tax concessions worth an estimated 40 million kina. Most important, the joint venturers believed that they had "made a crucial gain in predictability and stability" (Davis 1993, 24–25).

The ownership structure of the proposed Lihir gold mine in New Ireland province was also a major source of contention during the year. The government was concerned that the development of this major resource was being delayed unnecessarily by Kennecott, a subsidiary of the London-based mining giant Rio Tinto Zinc. Kennecott argued that the project was economically marginal, and indicated its reluctance to proceed unless a third party could be persuaded to join the Kennecott–Niugini Mining joint venture. The company suggested that the prevailing investment climate made it difficult to find such a partner, and that the Wingti government must accept

some responsibility for that situation (Togarewa 1993a; 1993b; 1993c).

The government used two tactics to push Kennecott toward an agreement to develop the Lihir project. The first involved calling Kennecott's bluff on the equity issue. After Kennecott had failed to meet a deadline to find a third party, the government announced that it would take up 20 percent of the equity itself, in addition to the 30 percent it had opted for previously. In a June letter to the chairman of Rio Tinto Zinc, Sir Derek Birkin, Prime Minister Wingti stated, "This lessens Kennecott's exposure to a project in which it clearly lacks confidence, and will, I trust, facilitate immediate progress on the project" (Togarewa 1993b). In August, Mining Minister Iangalio angrily rejected a belated proposal by Kennecott to sell a 20 percent share to a Canadian mining company, Venezuelan Goldfields. He confirmed that the government still planned to take 50 percent, and would find its own buyer for the extra 20 percent (*PC*, 13 Aug 1993, 1). The Malaysian government had already expressed interest in investing in Lihir through its company Malaysian Mining Corporation (Togarewa 1993a).

The second tactic used by the government to speed up the development of the Lihir resource was active involvement in the planning and design of the project. With Bob Needham, head of the state-owned Mineral Resources Development Corporation, in the lead, government officials and consultants subjected Kennecott's development plan to intense scrutiny. By September, estimated capital costs had been cut by 20 percent, improving the economics of the project considera-

bly (*PC*, 29 Oct 1993, 9; Needham 1993, 53).

By late September, with the government and its corporate partners in general agreement regarding project financing, it seemed likely that a special mining license would be issued in December, and that construction would begin early in 1994. The partners had agreed that the state and Niugini Mining would each take 30 percent of the project, with Kennecott holding 40 percent. They also agreed to float up to 40 percent of the shares in Lihir Gold, the project vehicle. Venezuelan Gold and Malaysian Mining Corporation were expected to purchase a significant proportion of those shares (*PC*, 27 Sept 1993, 1). Then, at the mining forum in November, where final details of the agreement were to be negotiated, local representatives demanded 20 percent of the equity for the landowners, and a further 10 percent for the provincial government (*TPNG*, 4 Nov 1993, 4). After their walkout, which brought talks to a halt, the government agreed to help the landowner company, Pangpang Development Corporation, borrow money to purchase shares in Lihir Gold (*PC*, 8 Nov 1993, 1). The special mining lease had not been issued by year's end, but was expected early in 1994.

Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund's report, presented in April, noted that the state's ability to capture revenues from the exploitation of its mineral resources had been disappointing. It recommended a new fiscal regime that relied more heavily on royalties, and a lowering of the existing threshold for additional profits tax, a device used to capture a large portion of exceptionally high profits for the

state. It also recommended an immediate strengthening of the state's capacity to monitor the fiscal aspects of resource projects and to enforce its tax regulations. Significantly, the report argued strongly that purchasing large amounts of equity in resource projects was risky, a poor use of scarce government resources, weakened the state's ability to borrow overseas, and conflicted with its regulatory duties (*TPNG*, 15 April 1993, 1). The events of 1993 demonstrate that at least some key members of the Wingti government and their advisers were not impressed by this advice, and in September the government agreed to increase its stake in the Ok Tedi copper and gold mine from 20 percent to 30 percent after Amoco Minerals withdrew (*PC*, 30 Sept 1993, 1). For them, it seems, equity participation is a useful instrument to exercise more control over large-scale resource developments in Papua New Guinea (Needham 1993).

Wingti's determination to "look north" to the dynamic countries of Asia for trade and investment opportunities also bore some fruit in 1993. His three-day visit to Indonesia in February, accompanied by some two hundred officials, politicians, and business executives, yielded a proposal for cooperation on oil and gas exploration, and one to establish a coffee processing factory in Papua New Guinea (*TPNG*, 11 Feb 1993, 1; 18 Feb 1993, 4, 21). The visit symbolized the beginning of a new, more broad-based, era in Papua New Guinea-Indonesia relations, long dominated by a narrow concern with the spillover effects of the guerrilla struggle in Irian Jaya.

Equally significant was the government's newfound enthusiasm for

Malaysia. Wingti visited Kuala Lumpur in January, and Malaysia's International Trade Minister Dato Seri Rafidah Aziz led a large trade and investment delegation to Papua New Guinea in May. Malaysian companies are best known in Papua New Guinea for their heavy and controversial involvement in the logging industry, described in a recent report as "out of control" (Nadarajah 1993). In welcoming the Malaysian delegation in May, Minister for Trade and Industry David Mai warned that foreign logging companies "either comply with the local rules or they are out" (1993, 58). Nevertheless, the government has welcomed new Malaysian investment in the country, offering Kimpulani Fima an attractive package of incentives to establish in Lae a mackerel-canning plant (which relies heavily on imported materials, at least initially), and inviting Malaysian Mining to purchase a share of the Lihir gold mine (*TPNG*, 14 Jan 1993, 26).

In June, despite strong opposition from a wide range of senior officials, cabinet approved a 50-million-kina plan to provide housing for the disciplined forces to be funded by the Malaysian government and a consortium of Malaysian banks (*TPNG*, 10 June 1993, 1). Officials noted that the deal had been arranged without regard to normal tendering, planning, and budgetary procedures, and was not a good one for Papua New Guinea. They argued that the costs were excessive, local content low, and that the Malaysian contractor, which the funding institutions had been allowed to select, would pay no taxes, fees, or import duties (*TPNG*, 24 June 1993, 1; *PC*, 25 June 1993, 1). Equally controversial was the government's decision to allow

Rimbunan Hijau, a company that controls more than 70 percent of Papua New Guinea's logging leases, to establish a new daily newspaper (*PC*, 12 July 1993, 1). Critics feared that the *Nation*, which started publishing in November, would become a vehicle to promote the company's commercial interests. The associate editor is Mr Wingti's former press secretary, and the publisher one of his close political associates. Early in the year, Rimbunan Hijau adopted the slogan We care for Papua New Guinea to help counter its negative corporate image (*TPNG*, 15 July 1993, 27).

The Wingti government's increasing enthusiasm for Asia has been matched by a growing ambivalence toward Australia. Part of the motivation for the "look north" policy is clearly to lessen the country's heavy dependence on the former colonial power, especially for trade and investment, but also for technical assistance and advice. Papua New Guinea leaders are very sensitive about questions of sovereignty, and periodically complain that Australians are paternalistic in their dealings with Papua New Guineans. In 1993 Minister for Foreign Affairs John Kaputin was the most prominent proponent of this view.

Kaputin demanded early in the year that Australia apologize for its disrespectful and arrogant behavior while attempting to return two African refugees who had entered Australia illegally from Papua New Guinea (*PC*, 19 Feb 1993, 1; 1 March, 1). Later, when two prominent naturalized citizens reclaimed their Australian citizenship, Kaputin stated that he would not tolerate "foreigners who think they can treat Papua New Guinea without

respect and dignity" (1993b, 64). In an outspoken address in Canberra in November, he argued that "attitudes, both official and private," were a major impediment to improved relations between Australia and Papua New Guinea (Kaputin 1993c, 16). Aspects of Kaputin's speech were reiterated by Deputy Prime Minister Chan in Brisbane in November (Chan 1993). Yet Papua New Guinea leaders also recognize that the relationship with Australia is, and will remain, a key one. In his Canberra speech, for example, the foreign minister seemed to want Australia to pay more attention to Papua New Guinea, not less.

A major point of tension in the relationship in 1993 was the ongoing shift from untied to tied forms of Australian aid. Until recently, Australia has provided the bulk of its substantial aid to Papua New Guinea, set at 219 million kina for 1993-94, in the form of direct budgetary support, which leaders were free to spend as they saw fit. Then in 1989 Prime Ministers Bob Hawke and Rabbie Namaliu signed the Development Cooperation Treaty, providing for a progressive reduction in the level of Australian aid, as well as a rapid shift from budget support to program and project funding. By 1993, tied aid represented 16 percent of the total. The plan is to increase this to 52 percent by 1997, and phase out budget support completely by the year 2000 (Aopi 1993, 3). Early in 1993, a major joint study was initiated to investigate how the increasing amounts of program and project aid might best be spent (*PC*, 9 Feb 1993, 2).

The shift to tied aid was motivated primarily by a feeling in Australia that

the 3.7 billion kina of support provided to Papua New Guinea between 1975 and 1993 had not been well spent. In a speech on the aid relationship in December, Australia's Minister for Pacific Island Affairs Gordon Bilney argued that Australian aid should be used to meet Papua New Guinea's "real needs," implying that it had not been used in that way to date (1993, 11). Officials in Papua New Guinea argue that the shift to tied aid is also motivated by commercial considerations, and estimate that up to 85 percent of project aid will flow back into the Australian economy (Aopi 1993, 7).

Understandably, leaders in Papua New Guinea are less than enthusiastic about the change, not least because it means an increase in Australia's direct involvement in Papua New Guinea's domestic affairs. Officials are also concerned that the real value of Australian aid to Papua New Guinea will decline, because of excessive administrative and consultancy costs as well as increased purchasing in Australia. Nevertheless, leaders had little option but to adjust to the new reality. After making his reservations clear in a major speech in November, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Planning Sir Julius Chan went on to say, "I am a realist and pragmatic enough to accept that a new system is desired by the donor and so long as PNG needs that money, we must now all do our best to make it work" (1993, 8). "Making it work" will not be easy for either side, and Australian officials may well live to regret their decision to get more directly involved in some of Papua New Guinea's more intractable problems.

Shortly after coming to power, Prime Minister Wingti stated that the provincial government system was wasteful and inefficient and had to go. In reports tabled in March and August 1993, a parliamentary select committee chaired by Ben Micah recommended replacing the existing nineteen provincial governments with provincial authorities (TPNG, 11 March 1993, 11; 19 Aug 1993, 4). Unlike provincial governments, these would have few legislative powers, no autonomous bureaucracies, and no full-time, salaried provincial politicians. The membership would consist of all the national members of Parliament from the province, local government council presidents, mayors, and representatives of non-governmental organizations. Each authority would be headed by the regional (province-wide) representative to the national Parliament. This part of the "bipartisan model" would recentralize political power, and give national members of Parliament considerably more control over the distribution of resources in their electorates (Saffu 1993, 7).

The Micah committee also recommended "the single most important change since independence"—the resurrection of hundreds of local-level governments. These village-level institutions would be constitutionally guaranteed sufficient financial and administrative support to operate effectively (TPNG, 19 Aug 1993, 4). However, local-level government has been under the jurisdiction of provincial governments since 1976 and has been almost universally neglected. It is not clear that national parliamentarians would be any more prepared than their pro-

vincial counterparts to fund potential political rivals, or to ensure that this was a genuine decentralization of power.

Predictably, the Micah reports were well received by all but a few members of Parliament. In August, Parliament quickly endorsed a proposal to establish an eighteen-member Constitutional Commission, headed by Micah, to implement the reports' recommendations. Armed with extremely broad terms of reference, the commission set about reviewing the Organic Law on Provincial Government, and other relevant parts of the constitution (Saffu 1993, 6). However, the assault on the provincial government system ran into some major obstacles later in the year.

The provincial premiers organized quickly to resist the Micah initiative. In September, a special meeting of the National Premiers Council totally rejected the committee's findings. The premiers of the New Guinea Islands region announced that they would secede if the recommendations of the report were implemented, and began organizing a referendum on the issue. Manus Premier Stephen Pokawin said he would arrange a public burning of the report when he got home (TPNG, 9 Sept 1993, 1). The provincial resistance was not unexpected. What was a surprise was Prime Minister Wingti's response to the premiers' demands when he met them in Goroka in October. Instead of launching the expected attack on provincial government, he took a very conciliatory line, even inviting the premiers to join some members of his government on a new review committee (TPNG, 7 Oct 1993, 1). In turn, Micah demanded that

Wingti publicly reconfirm his support for the constitutional commission (TPNG, 14 Oct 1993, 3). Although Wingti managed to persuade Micah not to resign early in November, the future of the whole review exercise remained uncertain at the end of the year (TPNG, 4 Nov 1993, 9).

Wingti's sudden change of heart on the provincial government issue was undoubtedly related to the barrage of criticism created by his resignation and immediate reelection as prime minister in September. However, even without that political firestorm (discussed later), the threat of secession had to be taken seriously. Furthermore, it was unclear how the architects of the proposal to abolish provincial government planned to deal with the Bougainville issue. In April, with large parts of the island back under government control, leaders from all parts of Bougainville met to discuss ways of resolving the five-year-old crisis. The idea of secession was described as "an impediment to peace," and "rejected outright now and in the future." However, the leaders demanded that the North Solomons Provincial Government be reinstated immediately, and argued that failure to do so could "regerminate and legitimize" secessionist sentiments in the province (PC, 27 April 1993, 11).

Although Prime Minister Wingti came to power committed to an early end to the Bougainville crisis, his first major policy statement on the issue did not come until March 1993. He chose to take a hard line with the rebels, describing them as "murderers" who must surrender or face death. Those who have committed atrocities, he said, must pay for their crimes because

“History teaches us that a bully must be beaten at his own game” (*TPNG*, 18 March 1993, 2). What was missing was any sense of how the social and political fabric of the war-torn province would be restored, if and when a military victory was achieved.

Wingti’s March statement appeared to confirm the conventional wisdom that the military, rather than the government, had the upper hand in the Bougainville operation. In recent years numerous aid workers and journalists have been refused entry to Bougainville despite clear authorization from Port Moresby. In November, a prominent international medical aid group withdrew from the country altogether, citing such frustrations. A spokesperson for Médecin Sans Frontières expressed the opinion that Bougainville was being run by a “dictatorship of the defence force” (*PC*, 22 Nov 1993, 1). Minister for Bougainville Michael Ogio had done little to dispel this notion earlier in the year. Responding to reports that the security forces had crossed the border with the Solomon Islands and taken control of Oema Island, Ogio acknowledged that the government had difficulty monitoring and controlling the actions of the security forces (*TPNG*, 15 April 1993, 3). This was one of several confrontations, some involving exchanges of fire, between Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands security forces during the year (*TPNG*, 7 Jan 1993, 2; *PC*, 27 April 1993, 1).

The security forces continued to expand their presence on Bougainville during 1993, establishing more bases in central and southern parts of the island, and arming civilian “resistance

groups” to counter the activities of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army. In February, with some fanfare, troops moved into the devastated provincial capital of Arawa (*PC*, 16 Feb 1993, 1). But this part of Operation Dynamo did not go as smoothly as planned. Ten days later, rebels ambushed and killed eight soldiers outside the town, the greatest number of casualties suffered by the security forces in a single incident since the crisis began (*PC*, 26 Feb 1993, 1). In a series of offensives over the next two weeks, soldiers killed an estimated thirty-five rebels in various parts of central and southern Bougainville (*PC*, 10 March 1993, 5).

Criticism of the Wingti government’s handling of the Bougainville crisis came from many different directions during 1993. The London-based human rights organization Amnesty International issued its second major report on the crisis in November, claiming that at least sixty people had been extrajudicially killed by government forces since 1991, and citing numerous cases of torture, rape, beatings, and harassment of suspected Bougainville Revolutionary Army members or sympathizers. Similar abuses were attributed by Amnesty to the rebel forces. Despite numerous statements of intent by government officials, the report noted that very little had actually been done to investigate allegations of human rights abuses and take steps to ensure that they did not recur (Amnesty International 1993).

Solomon Islands Prime Minister Solomon Mamaloni was equally outspoken in his condemnation of the Wingti government’s Bougainville pol-

icy. In an extraordinary departure from normal diplomatic protocols, Mameloni wrote a fourteen-page letter to Papua New Guinea Deputy Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan, in which he accused the government of indifference to “the total annihilation of Bougainvillians,” among other things (*PC*, 24 March 1993, 11; 25 March, 11; 26 March, 11). Another letter leaked to the press during the year, this one seven pages long, indicated some dissent within the government itself. Minister for Foreign Affairs John Kaputin wrote to the prime minister to express his dismay at the aggressive tone of Wingti’s Bougainville statement and the cabinet’s decision to delay inviting an international fact-finding mission to visit (*PC*, 15 April 1993, 1). In a subsequent statement to Parliament, Kaputin warned that failure to allow such visits “could have far reaching—and adverse—implications for Papua New Guinea” (1993a, 3).

Perhaps the most hopeful development during the year was the pan-Bougainville dialogue inaugurated by the leaders at Buka in April (*PC*, 27 April 1993, 11). There were strong indications that powerful factions within the rebel movement were ready to participate in further talks. However, the Wingti government was apparently not prepared to facilitate a second conference in Cairns that would have included representatives of the secessionist movement.

The Wingti government had promised firm action on Papua New Guinea’s perennial problems of law and order, and several strategies were pursued. Late in 1992, plans were

announced to increase the strength of the police force by fifteen hundred over three years (*TPNG*, 23 Dec 1992, 2). By August 1993, boom gates were under construction on three roads into Port Moresby, presumably to help police control the movement of criminals (*TPNG*, 26 Aug 1993, 9). Meanwhile, the National Law, Order and Justice Council had been formed to replace a plethora of existing law and order committees (*PC*, 15 March 1993, 1). Much more significant was a series of legislative measures introduced or announced during 1993 that were designed to combat civil disorder.

In July, arguing that “The crime problem facing us warrants drastic action,” Wingti announced a system of national registration and associated identification cards. He also announced the introduction of a constitutional amendment that would allow the burden of proof to be shifted from the state to the accused in serious criminal cases (*PC*, 27 July 1993, 1). Predictably, this measure raised the ire of civil libertarians, with former Attorney General Bernard Narokobi describing presumption of innocence as “the cornerstone of civilized democratic societies” (*PC*, 30 July 1993, 1).

The most controversial law and order measure introduced in 1993 was the Internal Security Act passed by Parliament in May and gazetted in August. The Act allows the head of state to ban organizations that are, in his opinion, “promoting or encouraging, or . . . likely to or about to promote or encourage terrorism.” Appeals against designation as a terrorist organization are to be heard, not by an independent

body, but by cabinet and the head of state, who would have issued the orders in the first place. Alleged members or supporters of such organizations can be identified by the police commissioner and imprisoned (*TPNG*, 20 May 1993, 4, 11, 15).

Critics were dismayed by the way the legislation was pushed through Parliament without serious debate. They were also concerned about the enormous discretionary power it gives to the executive branch of the government, and the associated erosion of the individual freedoms protected by the constitution. In October, the Ombudsman Commission filed a challenge to the Act in the Supreme Court (*TPNG*, 7 Oct 1993, 1).

The court had not passed judgment on the Internal Security Act by the end of the year. By this time Wingti himself was having second thoughts about its utility. In another stunning reversal, the prime minister announced in October that he would consider amendments to the Act. The immediate impetus for this particular change of heart seems to have come from Minister for Mining Masket Iangalio, who had already gained the support of some other members of the government (*PC*, 6 Oct 1993, 1). Like his previous reversal on the provincial government issue, Wingti's decision was heavily influenced by the political fallout from his slick maneuvers in Parliament at the end of September.

The mechanics of Wingti's September ploy were simple. He gave a letter of resignation dated Thursday, 23 September to Governor General Sir Wiwa Korowi. On the morning of 24 Septem-

ber, Speaker Bill Skate announced the resignation in Parliament, read the governor general's response, and called for nominations for the office of prime minister. With the opposition caught completely off guard, Communications Minister Martin Thompson, the architect of the scheme, nominated Wingti, who was duly reelected unopposed (*TPNG*, 30 Sept 1993, 4). Wingti claimed that the possibility of a vote of no confidence early in 1994 was an unacceptable source of instability that placed his reform program in jeopardy. As it turned out, his successful bid to remove the threat served to weaken, rather than strengthen, his position.

Speculation about likely contenders for power in a vote of no confidence had long centered on Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the Peoples Progress Party Sir Julius Chan, who was known to disagree with Wingti over certain key policy issues, such as how best to deal with the mining companies. Furthermore, his party's parliamentary strength, at twenty, was second only to that of Wingti's Peoples Democratic Party, and could have provided the core of a new coalition. It was no coincidence that Wingti's resignation gambit occurred when Chan was out of the country. Chan claimed no prior knowledge of it (*TPNG*, 30 Sept 1993, 3).

Wingti underestimated the level of opposition that his move would provoke. Several thousand people marched on Parliament to demand the resignation of Wingti, Skate, and Korowi. Chris Havieta, who had become leader of the opposition after Jack Genia died suddenly of malaria in

July, instigated a court challenge charging some technical irregularities. Although the National Court ruled in Wingti's favor in December, the late-night scheming revealed by the case was politically destructive (*TPNG*, 2 Dec 1993, 10). Perhaps most damaging, however, were the rumblings of dissent that emanated from within the government. At least six coalition supporters complained publicly of Wingti's dictatorial style, and some of them joined the opposition (*TPNG*, 30 Sept 1993, 1). Ben Micah, who was leading the attack on provincial government for Wingti, was a vocal critic of the resignation move (*TPNG*, 7 Oct 1993, 3).

Although Wingti managed to survive his self-inflicted political crisis, there were serious consequences for his program of reforms. With his public and parliamentary support significantly eroded, he was forced to seek a broader consensus on the provincial government and law and order issues. The momentum for radical change will be hard to regain.

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SOLOMON ISLANDS

New Year's Eve 1992 brought havoc to the southeastern parts of Solomon Islands as Cyclone Nina passed through. Parts of Malaita, South Guadalcanal, Makira, Temotu, and Rennell and Bellona were devastated. For the people in these islands, a season of celebration and reflection became overnight a time of disaster and lost hopes. Homes and schools had to be rebuilt, new gardens had to be cleared, and short-term assistance was necessary. The much-needed assistance was given promptly when the whole nation pitched in and, with some help from other governments and organizations, pledged \$1.5 million toward the government's rehabilitation program (ss, March 1993). As in the aftermath of other natural disasters, Solomon Islanders looked to the future with optimism as they rebuilt their homes, churches, and schools, and hoped for better fortune in the year to come.

Another kind of storm—a political one—was awaited with equal uncer-

tainty. The national general election took place on 26 May 1993. Seats in each of the 47 constituencies throughout the country were contested by some 280 candidates. The state of uncertainty lasted for some time after the results were announced over national radio. Solomon Mamaloni's party of National Unity won the most seats, but with only 21 of the total of 47 it did not have a clear majority. Of the other parties, the People's Alliance Party led by Nathaniel Waena won 7 seats; the new National Action Party of Solomon Islands (Francis Saemala) and the United Party (Ezekiel Alebua) won 5 each; the Labour Party (Josef Tuhanuku) won 4; the National Front for Progress (Andrew Nori) and the new Solomon Islands Leaders Fellowship (Reverend Michael Maeliau) won 2 each; and 1 was won by an independent (Francis Billy Hilly). A coalition government had to be formed.

Uncertainty and political speculation were fueled by strong indications that veteran politician and incumbent Prime Minister Solomon Mamaloni and his party might lose their parliamentary majority. The first sign of impending doom for Mamaloni came with the election for Speaker of the House, which was held a few weeks after the general election and before that for the new prime minister. In the election for the Speaker, the two contending groups, the Government for National Unity led by Mamaloni and the National Coalition Partnership group whose leader was yet to be named, fielded their respective candidates. Waita Ben, who was then Speaker, was the nominee of the Government for National Unity, and Paul