

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

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

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

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

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### FRENCH POLYNESIA

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

Meanwhile, the economic situation is further deteriorating.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The juridical examinations continued but slowed in the following

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LORENZ GONSCHOR

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## MĀORI ISSUES

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

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

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