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PACIFIC ISLANDS

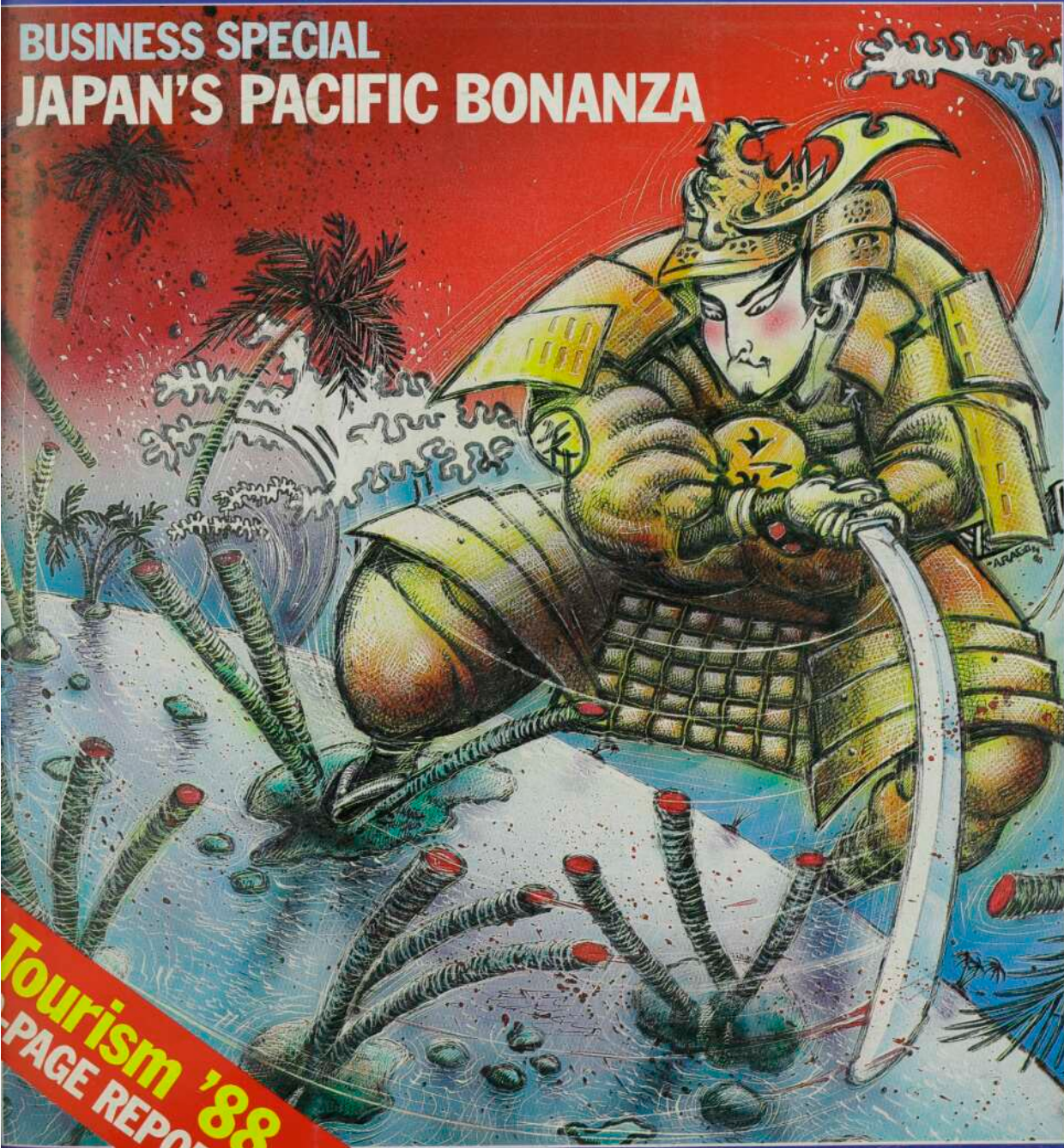
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FEBRUARY 1988

BUSINESS SPECIAL JAPAN'S PACIFIC BONANZA



**Tourism '88
PAGE REPORT**

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OPINION

Thorns Among The Roses

The Wingti Government's excellent record has been tarnished lately by a series of potentially costly misjudgments and ministerial fiascos.



Mr Wingti: feted in Australia but problems at home.

THE GOVERNMENT of Paiax Wingti has much of which it can be proud. Its rural development program — the Prime Minister's personal obsession — is a highly praiseworthy scheme that, if successful, will make Papua New Guinea more self-sufficient, its citizens more prosperous and self-respecting, as well as enticing people from the relative anonymity and welfare queues of the cities back to the rich traditions of the provinces.

Also to the Government's credit is its responsible foreign policy. Mr Wingti has made his nation more secure by locking Indonesia and Australia into trade and defence agreements, is establishing a host of new trading partners, and is an influential and eloquent spokesman for Melanesian interests all over the Pacific.

The Government has benefited, too, by the dedicated

work of Sir Julius Chan in getting the business community on side.

However, the Government's record is not all rosy. Major debits must be the decision to appoint national MPs to Government agency boards, the forcing of foreign-owned coffee exporting companies to sell out by October, and the Government's seeming inability to do anything about the country's continuing law and order problems.

The Wingti Administration's image has not been helped by the series of scandals, gaffes and fiascos that have dogged the steps of the once influential, now disgraced, Ted Diro and the hapless Mr Matiabe.

But the proposal with the potential to do the most telling damage to the Government is the controversial bill, announced by Communications Minister Mr Gabriel Ramoi, to control the nation's media by the establishment of a mass media tribunal. Despite the Government's high-sounding claims that such controls will ensure the preservation of national ideals and put the brakes on foreign ownership, the bill reeks of Iron Curtain regulation.

Shackling of the media has no place in this otherwise energetic and free-spirited nation. And the sections of the bill that direct a licensee to publish whatever the minister deems to be of national importance, and that prohibit the publication of material prohibited by the minister, the mass media tribunal or the censor, are shackles of the most blatant kind.

When announcing the proposed legislation, Mr Ramoi said the bill was non-negotiable. Mr Wingti has since said he is seeking consultation with media owners, the churches, the opposition and business, a considerable softening of the original stance. It is hoped that this consultation will help the Government see the error of its way and scrap this odious legislation.

Why Conservation Is Crucial

ALTHOUGH Australia attracts its fair share of criticism, especially when it is spending millions of dollars to celebrate its first 200 years, there is one area in which it can stand as a model for the South Pacific: the conservation of fauna and flora. Not that the country's record is without a significant number of blemishes — an estimated 200 species of animals and plants, one per year of European settlement, have become extinct in Australia since 1788 — but laudable efforts are being made and tradition notwithstanding, public attitudes have swung firmly in favour of environmental and biological protection. Not only have successive governments sought

to protect Australian wildlife in reserves and national parks and through the control of exports, but they have encouraged conservation in other countries.

One of the most significant initiatives in international fauna and flora protection is CITES — the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. CITES seeks to control the exploitation of endangered plants and animals through rigorous prosecution of smugglers and through the promotion of alternatives to, for example, the fur of endangered cats or the export of rare orchids. And there is growing evidence that CITES is having an impact in those countries where it has been adopted.

OPINION

But adoption has not been universal, and for a variety of reasons almost 70 nations have not signed the Convention. Among them are Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Western Samoa.

In the face of pressing economic and social needs, it is tempting to dismiss conservation as a side issue — until one looks at the record in other developing nations. Brazil is destroying its greatest natural resource, the rainforest of the Amazon basin, at a rate of hectares per day — for the immediate and long-term benefit of firms based in strong First World nations. Similarly, much of northern Africa's growing desert (the Sahara is expanding southward at more than 25 kilometres a year) is "fed" by agricultural practices that allow the destruction of habitats and finely evolved natural systems. In the Pacific, the problem is growing too: timber exploitation, mainly in PNG and the Solomons, is endangering whole human communities as well as animal and plant groups. Even coastal fishermen are feeling the effects as the denudation of inland forests brings soil runoff to reefs, killing fish and corals.

A more telling statistic is that the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources' *Red Data Book*, which lists animals and plants endangered, or at risk of extinction, includes 237 animals alone in the Pacific region. No-one knows for sure how many plants are at risk; just as no-one knows for sure what effect the extinction of any one of those animals or plants will have on whole ecosystems, or the potential benefits to humans of chemicals extracted from animals (such as marine organisms) or plants. Quite apart from potential benefits to humanity, what value can we place on the survival of even the lowliest organism for its own sake? We are presumptuous if we decide which plants and animals may live, and which may not: just as we are when we divide societies along racial, religious or ethnic lines.

The Pacific attracts tourists and scientists because it is perceived as one of the planet's last unspoiled regions. Unless Pacific peoples realise that their landscapes and their plant and animal communities are non-renewable, non-negotiable resources, their quaint customs and attractive artifacts are destined to become savagely inappropriate reminders of how the inhabitants of paradise gradually sold their way into perdition.



New Caledonia's flightless cagou.

6 PACIFIC ISLANDS MONTHLY — FEBRUARY 1988

A Silenced Majority

A CHILLING message this month from Mr Richard Naidu, former spokesman for the deposed Indian-dominated Government in Fiji. Speaking from Auckland following his expulsion from Fiji, Mr Naidu warned that the ousted coalition members would soon begin "testing" the Fijian Army's authority and that protests against the new, military-backed Government would become more strident.

In the understandable jubilation that has met Fiji's return to a civilian Government, sight has been lost of the fact that the majority of Fiji's population has been disenfranchised: except for that of the sole Indian, Mrs Narayan, Minister for Indian Affairs, in the Cabinet, Indian voices have been silenced.

Qualified, experienced people — such as Dr Bavadra, who has proven himself prepared to put sectional Indian interests second to those of the nation as a whole — have been frozen out of any discussions on the new constitution or on the transition from a military to a civilian Government.

Such shortsightedness does not augur well for the future of the Indians who, no doubt, will be expected to continue to play their part in the public service, business sector and the sugar industry.

So far, the Indians of Fiji have behaved with restraint in the face of relentless, sometimes brutal, provocation from some indigenous Fijians. Mr Naidu's warning is all the more worrying for that. He himself was subjected to mob violence by a band of Taukei thugs. It is hoped that he does not have a similar form of rough justice in mind when he warns of the "stridency" to come. □

Quoted

"They have started off well but some have fallen victim to the chief occupational hazards of being a leader — pride and a lust for power."

PNG Prime Minister Paias Wingti, expressing concern about some of his country's leaders.

"Until an impartial honours awards committee is set up to assess the true contributors to national development, the British High Commissioner must advise the Queen not to accept nominations for honours from Papua New Guinea."

PNG opposition member Brown Sinamoi, describing this year's honours list as a sad example of politicians favouring friends.

"Fellow citizens, let me assure you that I am not an opportunist."

Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara in an address to the Fijian nation.

"It is obvious that the lack of a clear, coherent forestry policy has created a very serious situation."

Justice Barnett in his preliminary report of the commission of inquiry into the PNG timber industry.

"If Papua New Guinea does not control its newspapers, radio and television, then the media can never become great agents for the distribution of national thought and ideals."

PNG Communications Minister Gabriel Ramoi on his Government's plans to regulate and control all media outlets.

FRENCH POLYNESIA

A New Order Takes Charge

Alexandre Léontieff's sudden rise to power may see an end to Tahiti's bitter confrontational politics. By Nicolas Rothwell.

BEHIND THE sound and fury of changing government in Papeete at year's end, a far more subtle and profound transformation was taking place in French Polynesia — a territory where the calm grace of surface appearances is always deceptive, and revolutionary passions lurk unknown.

When Alexandre Léontieff, the young, technocratic new President of the Territorial Assembly, staged his December coup, ending the political control of his long-time mentor, Gaston Flosse, insiders in Papeete were slow to realise this was more than a routine convulsion in the established sanctuaries of power; more than a quarrel within the ruling house.

In fact, the direct antecedent to the Léontieff coup was an event outside Papeete's incestuous political arena — an event that has already assumed symbolic significance throughout Tahiti, as quickly as it passes into the realms of myth — the October riots that swept the capital, leaving many harbourside shopfronts smoking ruins.

Emblem of a failing order, or portent of greater turmoils to come, the "troubles" in Papeete served as pretext for a sudden splintering of French Polynesia's political order; Mr Léontieff was able to pull together a coalition drawn from the ranks both of the Gaullist establishment Tahoeraa Huiraatira and the many-faceted opposition parties.

Even if his reign is brief, this one act has drastically redefined the political map of the territory, and ended an era of confrontational politics — an era that was indisputably dominated by the Tahoeraa's master politician, Mr Gaston Flosse.

Yet this shake-up of French Polynesia's power structure is complicated by one overarching factor — the crucial influence exerted by the coming April's mainland French Presidential campaign on the political complexion of all the overseas territories.

The socialist incumbent, Mr Francois Mitterrand, will face determined challenges from a pair of conservative contenders — one, the current Prime Minister, Mr Jacques Chirac, is the Tahoeraa's established patron; the other, economic affairs guru and former Prime Minister Raymond Barre, is likely to attract the support of Mr Léontieff.

But significantly, elements of the new ruling coalition are already pledged to



"The direct antecedent to the Léontieff coup was the October riot that swept the capital, leaving shopfronts smoking."

supporting the Mitterrand candidacy, so an early and fundamental test of the "non-ideological" Léontieff Government is in prospect.

Relations between the territory and the distant French mainland or "metropol" are also complicated by the tangled web of political alliances caused by the Léontieff coup. Prime Minister Chirac's own Rassemblement Pour la République (RPR) is bound to support Mr Flosse, who is a member of the Chirac Cabinet in his capacity as minister with responsibility for Pacific affairs; yet, now out of government, Mr Flosse's Tahoeraa may be a less capable campaigning force.

For Mr Flosse himself, the ousting of the territorial Government led by his loyal lieutenant, Mr Jacky Teuira, was a body blow, since a part of his prestige — and effectiveness — in the South Pacific stemmed from his local power base.

Should Mr Mitterrand win the Presidential poll, Mr Flosse would lose his portfolio, and France's entire Pacific policy would almost certainly be revised.

An unlikely agent of that change emerged just before new year in Paris, when Mr Léontieff himself suggested to President Mitterrand that he give consideration to reactivating a moribund instrument of French influence in the Pacific — the South Pacific Council, presided over by a prominent radical intellectual, Mr Régis Debray.

Indeed, since he assumed control of the territorial Government, Mr Léontieff has been on an intriguing political journey. His conservative critics complain that he is under the malign influence of leftists in his governing coalition — but the truth seems to be that he believes French Polynesia, a delicate society in a stage of transition, needs a politics of unity more than the confrontational techniques that maintained the Tahoeraa in power.

Mr Léontieff speaks the language of conciliation and compromise; as well he must, since he aims to marshal a Government of widely disparate forces; there are the turncoat ministers from the Tahoeraa, such as Mrs Huguette Hong-Kiou and Mr Georges Kelly; there is maverick businessman (and arch-enemy of Gaston Flosse) Mr Quito Braun-Ortega; there is his own brother, the highly capable and moderate Boris Léontieff, an early fugitive from the Tahoeraa; and there is the pro-independence leader of the Ia Mana Te Nunaa party, Mr Jacqui Drollet.

The new President speaks expansively of the "will of the great majority of the population to see the creation of a new political order based on opening dialogue and solidarity — where each party agrees to put aside ideological quarrels".

He is impelled to this position in part by his own deep awareness of the economic plight of French Polynesia — a society largely dependent on the funds pumped in by Paris: "Our economy can

no longer rely indefinitely on a system whose supports are the Pacific nuclear test centre and trade," he explains. Despite Mr Léontieff's economic credentials and his emphasis on the need to set aside partisan politics, it is inevitable his choice of partners must both reflect his aspirations and, in turn, affect his own agenda. In this light, the presence of Mr Drollet, a staunch opponent of the French CEP (nuclear test centre) as his Health Minister is a vital litmus of his intentions.

of the new Léontieff administration may be overstated; he is only one of many forceful party leaders yoked in coalition — but the analysis he offers of the sudden change in conditions in Papeete that led to the formation of the new Government is instructive.

In Mr Drollet's view, the October riots were prefigured often in preceding months; dialogue had "been possible" between opposition party leaders and the Léontieff brothers, but earlier in 1987 Léontieff "had



Opposite page: New President of the Territorial Assembly, Alexandre Léontieff. Above: Leader of the Ia Mana Te Nunaa Party Jacqui Drollet. Far left: Gaston Flosse. Left: Former Tahoeraa Party minister Huguette Hong-Kiou.

Mr Drollet is a Tahitian politician in the grand style. (Though both men would be horrified by the thought, he seems a younger version of Mr Flosse himself — utterly charming and charismatic, a "demi" partaking of both the French and Polynesian worlds, perfectly attuned to the intricacies of the vote-count, yet consumed by ideology.) The agenda of his Ia Mana party is simple: to build up the financial prowess of the territory until independence is possible, and to remove the CEP, not because of environmental concerns but because its presence distorts the economy: "We must kill the elephant in our china shop," he explains engagingly.

The role of Mr Drollet in the conduct

not been ripe" for the Presidency.

It took a cascade of events — the riots, the forcing through of the last budget — to convince him to take action against the Tahoeraa Government; another hidden factor was Mr Flosse's decision to pass him over as candidate for the Territorial Presidency last February.

Undoubtedly, given the complexity of the patchwork-quilt of parties active in Papeete, the importance of other leaders must be emphasised; the Mayor of the city, Mr Jean Juventin, the newly elected speaker of the assembly, is a key figure in the background, while the role of another radical leader, Mr Emile Vernaudeau, is also significant.

"Times are changing . . . and this is what Gaston Flosse did not understand — this need of the young to express themselves."

◀ But analysts are now recognising the extent to which Mr Léontieff's decision to lead the defection from the Tahoeraa was a personal one — a move that grew from the troubled ties between himself and Mr Flosse; and in that pattern can be traced other tokens of change now gusting through Tahiti.

One intimate of Mr Léontieff ventures that the riots were "only the tip of an iceberg of change, they were symptoms; for we have an economy that desperately needs a new source of funds, we have a fast-growing population but no jobs — this means the time is here for action, and the broader the consensus, the better it is".

Léontieff's supporters tend to claim that their new administration will be more "Tahitian", that it will avoid the confrontational styles supposedly characteristic of French mainland politics.

Another of the inner circle, this "court

of Czar Alexandre", hints at the prevailing optic being employed by Polynesian observers to explain December's palace coup: "This was as much about generations as about politics — you can see it all over the territory — the young displaces the old and assumes power."

This pattern is traced in the realm of social change, where the once-undisputed writ of the family elders is now increasingly challenged by members of the cosmopolitan younger generation. Many of Tahiti's young have come to develop a bitter resentment toward the consumerism-obsessed, tourism-fuelled society that has failed to provide them with the jobs they need to enjoy the lifestyles that have been promised them.

Significantly, as these changes are taking place, the established political allegiances enjoyed by parties such as the Tahoeraa may begin to break down, not

coat who could never have won power at the polls, and so was forced to seize it by parliamentary manoeuvre.

In this version of events, Flosse figures not as an old reactionary but as the friend of youth — as the first Polynesian politician who gave opportunities to younger leaders, a rare meritocrat who rewarded brilliance and enterprise. And nothing is as certain, for those who entertain this view, as that Mr Flosse will sweep back to power again in the next election, vanquishing the ungrateful prodigal.

The two pictures have almost no point of contact; but they do reveal one basic truth — that the upheavals in French Polynesia have as much to do with deep currents of social turmoil as with mere political conflict.

A further element is vital to the tapestry of influences that shape events in Papeete; the role of the Church, and in particular the dominant religious order, the Evangelical Church, itself fiercely opposed to the CEP and supportive of greater political independence for the territory.

Here too, a recent sea change has blown through the establishment. Pastor Jacques Ihorai, newly elected to the head of the order, speaks sombrely of the Evangelical Church's "awareness" of the economic problems of the territory, the importance of unemployment, the effects of the CEP, the dangers of excessive migration from France, and the rapid changes taking place across French Polynesia:

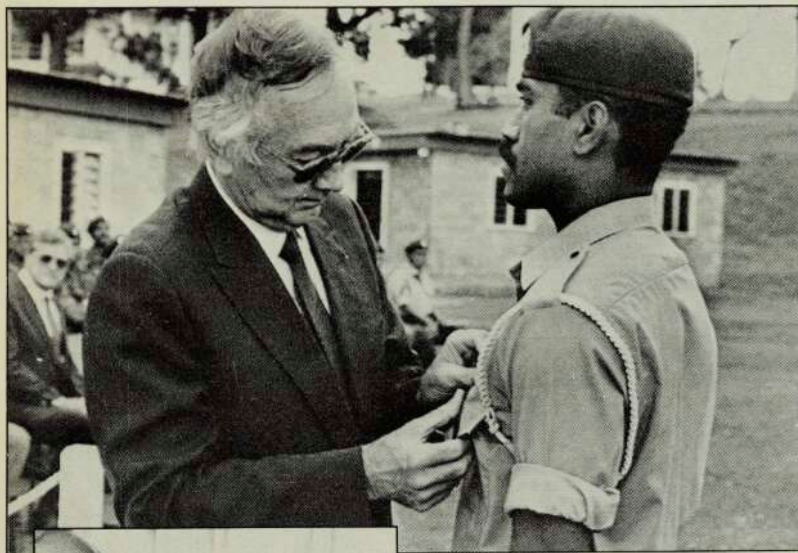
"When we have a truth to proclaim, and we feel it is evangelical, we are not silent — we are in a dramatic situation here, and we are called on in the church to renew ourselves."

Pastor Ihorai contends: "We are against the bomb, not just in Mururoa, but everywhere, because we do not think Jesus calls on us to destroy ourselves."

Like many other fresh influences in Papeete, this subtle and inspiring man seems both to answer to and to incarnate a new trend of eager determination visible throughout Tahitian society; sometimes expressing itself in the smooth political manoeuvres of a Léontieff, sometimes in the ragged street protests of the dockers.

At times, it possesses the calm veneer of Polynesian nationalism; at times, wearing the glamorous coat of poverty, it appeals for social justice and political independence.

It can be presented by some as crude political treachery, by some as the natural passage between generations. But there is one simple conclusion to be drawn from all this passionate commitment — even in drowsy-scented Tahiti, the fruits of an unchanging paradise can pall. □



The style of Gaston Flosse. Above: decorating a Fijian soldier for bravery. Left: With the French ambassador to Australia.

only at the parliamentary level but also amongst the electorate, as younger family members proceed to break ranks with their elders.

"Times are changing — it is May '68 that has been happening here over the past few months, and this is what Gaston Flosse didn't understand — this need of the younger generation to express themselves," one thoughtful political insider comments.

But a key Tahoeraa loyalist, one of Mr Flosse's most trusted aides, sees things differently; he views Léontieff as a turn-

FIJI

Counting The Cost

Fiji struggles to restore stability. By John Dunn

FIJI WILL probably never be the same again, but it does seem the situation looks considerably more promising than in the dark days after May 14. Nevertheless, it is also clear that there are still very many problems to overcome.

Several developments, both internally and externally, in the early days of 1988 appear likely to play an important part in shaping the immediate outcome for Fiji.

At home the principal plus is that the nation remains not only violence-free but remarkably settled and stable. The new civilian Government headed by former Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara is settling in and adopting a low-key and commendably cautious approach to its

rule. Its most important initial task is the approval of the interim constitution, which will become the supreme law of the country until a new constitution is adopted.

The publication of its details and their acceptance, or otherwise, will largely hold the key to the future administration of the country.

In the meantime, an extremely tough budget is in place in an attempt to halt the nation's deteriorating financial situation. The uncertainty that followed the first coup caused a negative growth rate of 11 per cent last year but the budget is designed not only to arrest that trend but to cut the negative growth rate by about half in 1988. Indirect taxes will be increased,

with excise rates being raised on cigarettes, tobacco, beer, spirits and petrol.

As well, a two per cent duty has been placed on major exports including sugar, timber, gold and silver while the hotel turnover tax has been increased by three per cent to eight per cent.

These additional costs will make it even tougher for the majority of the population, already hard hit by prices that have risen about a third since the first coup. Traders have reported a general downturn of about 50 per cent in sales with some items, such as meat, falling by about 80 per cent. Shoppers are relying on the staples such as potatoes and onions.

The cost of living is not the only aspect of Fiji's daily life that has been affected. A severe brain drain is under way among professional people, ranging from doctors and lawyers to teachers and those with management expertise. Almost all are Indian and they have decided their future lies elsewhere, mainly in Australia, New Zealand or Canada.

The area worst hit is medicine, where hospital attention has been curtailed because of lack of skilled staff, causing the virtual elimination of elective surgery. The new civilian Government is well aware of this alarming situation and is searching actively for staff in several Asian countries.

However, while these problems are real and disturbing enough, there are some pluses on the home front, quite apart from the return of general community stability and orderliness.

The threat to peace posed by the militant Taukei movement seems to be under control even if it has not been completely extinguished.

An end-of-year demonstration by Taukei extremists, who want the Government to take a harder and tougher pro-Fijian line or disband, and the Great Council of Chiefs to have a stronger and more direct voice in Government decisions, was turned aside with no violence and only a minor disruption to the newfound calm. The movement has been virtually neutralised by a split within its ranks, with a significant number of members happy to go along with the more moderate stance of the new civilian administration.

In fact, one of the Taukei leaders, Mr Taniela Veitata, has accepted a ministerial (Employment and Industrial Relations) and cabinet position that has taken considerable steam out of the Taukei stand.

Another positive factor in the general situation is the measured and considered stance adopted by deposed Prime Minister Dr Timoci Bavadra, who has made it clear that his coalition party will cam-



Ousted PM Dr Bavadra will contest the next election.

PACIFIC ISLANDS MONTHLY — FEBRUARY 1988 11

...anyhow*
have a
Winfield 25's



**Five
smokes
ahead of
the rest**

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AUSTRALIA

Spender Slams Pacific Neglect

Australia's shadow Foreign Minister speaks out. By Larry Writer

AN AUSTRALIAN Government policy of "leisurely neglect" in the South Pacific has resulted in slippage of influence and widespread confusion about the country's objectives in the region. This was an abiding impression gained by Australia's Opposition spokesman on Foreign Affairs, Mr John Spender, while on a fact-finding mission to island nations.

Australia's foreign policy, says Mr Spender, must be to protect and promote its national interests and security with vigour by ensuring stability, regional democracy and democratic institutions. He believes the Government's reduction or abolition of aid to needy countries — "Fiji and PNG come to mind" — has opened the way for other powers to gain a foothold in many island states strategically vital to Australia.

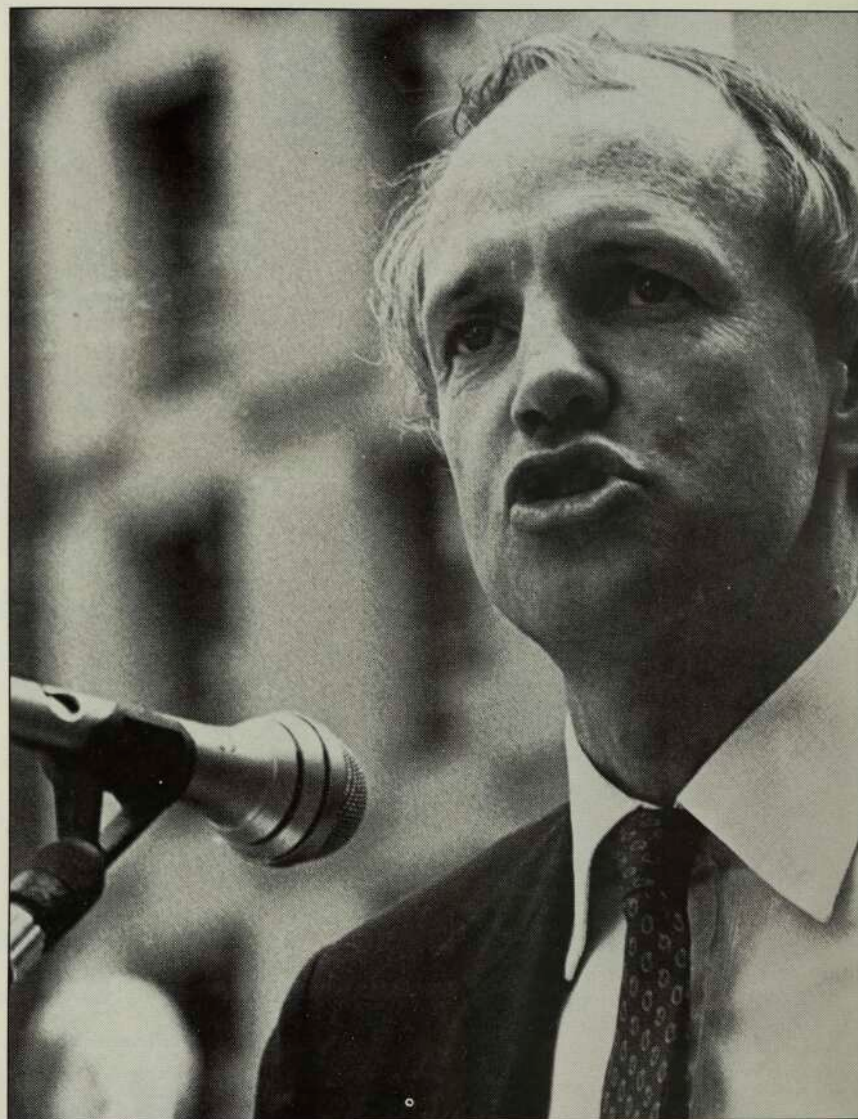
Mr Spender also slams the Australian Government's "strident" reaction to the coups in Fiji, to Libyan mischief-making in Vanuatu and New Caledonia, and to French policy in New Caledonia, saying it has done nothing constructive for the people of those nations.

He recalls an American general's comment to him in Hawaii that, "We may not have great gains to make in the region, but we can suffer great losses." That dictum, Mr Spender says, applies equally to Australia.

He is also critical of the quality of some Australian diplomats in island states. "We should be putting the South Pacific at the top of our list of diplomatic priorities. Our best representation should be in the Pacific, the area of immediate and strategic national interest: a posting in the region shouldn't be a stepping-stone to Paris or Washington or a reward for long service." Australia should be sending its brightest and best people to the region. That way Australia could develop real and formidable expertise in the complicated affairs of the island nations.

"We should be, without doubt, the leader of the region in terms of knowledge," he says. "It is dangerous and unwise to think that just because you are dealing with small countries, their politics are simple."

The Foreign Affairs spokesman, speaking to *Pacific Islands Monthly* in his office amid the steel and glass towers of North Sydney, says his trip reinforced for him the problems faced by Pacific nations that were sparsely settled, economically



underdeveloped or non-viable, and isolated from main lines of communication. "How do the governments of such countries deliver adequate medical care, ensure a basic education for the children, provide drinking water? The answer is: with difficulty, or not at all.

"That's why Australia has a responsibility to maintain aid and training programs tailored to the specific needs of individual countries. We must help with these nations' defence, especially in protecting the fisheries zones of the small is-

land states, something that is virtually impossible for them to do alone. We must be their friend and ally, and co-operate politically and diplomatically."

Mr Spender says that if Australia neglects its responsibilities to these island states, or fails to take an active or constructive role in the region, foreign powers with different interests could fill the vacuum. "The Opposition believes in aid, not sanctions. Sanctions only hurt the people. When sanctions are imposed, or aid is cut off, a needy country is forced to reroute its



Although its use is widespread and often purely social, the drinking of Kava is still an indispensable part of ceremony.

Unsurprisingly, the Vanuatu Government has decided the export of this panacea could help its economy, and the Vanuatu Commodities Marketing Board has been entrusted with the task of international kava promotion. An engaging leaflet extols the virtues of kava: "Here is a totally natural product, known for centuries in the Pacific for its wonderful potential to bring about a sense of calm wellbeing without hangovers or unpleasant side-effects. Like fine French wines, the kavas of Vanuatu are tended and grown on unique soil types by people who know their properties thoroughly."

But this image of the sophisticated ni-Vanuatu "kava-culteur" is a slight westernisation: on Tanna, for example, where the drinking of kava reaches its ritualised peak, the sunset drinking of the potion is seen as a way of enhancing contact with the non-material or spirit world.

Pioneering studies on Tanna by Amer-

ican-based anthropologist Monty Lindstrom have isolated a ceremony of spitting, after draining the dregs of a kava draught, as a kind of prayer that allows the drinker to alert a particular spirit to a message he is sending. On Tanna, the kava root is traditionally chewed in preparation for drinking by younger men who have not yet had sexual intercourse with women, then mixed with water, squeezed, filtered and drunk fresh. In certain northern islands of Vanuatu, kava is ground using special, stick-shaped reef coral; elsewhere the root is simply pulverised.

The social setting for kava drinking — and the reception of the drink by the community — also vary greatly from place to place. Mostly, kava is drunk in the *nakamal*, to enhance peace and discussion about traditional concerns; because of its tranquillising effect, which can banish even thoughts of violence, it is often used to cement agreements and underpin pea-

cemaking ceremonies. On Tanna, kava exchange is central in rituals of clan alliance; talking while one drinks kava is forbidden on this island.

Kava has always been linked on Vanuatu with the magic rituals that form a central thread of life; with the realm of sorcerers and traditional doctors. Deep myths about kava's origins, meaning and correct use exist across the islands. "Once you realise the full story of the origin of kava, you see why it's such an important plant," says one informant; but like most reports from Vanuatu's shimmering magic world, these regards cannot be spoken of without direct consequences.

On a more secular note, the drinking of kava in Port Vila has a visible effect on the city's life. Almost crime-free, Vila — unlike many cities of the South Pacific — retains a strong traditional authority structure through elected leaders of each island community resident in the capital. ►

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Queensland Museum, but later partially dispersed to several other Australian museums), weapons vastly outnumber other artifacts: a disproportionately high representation that reflects his concern with pacification, but which fails to give an accurate impression of the proportion in which weapons occurred in the material culture of a society (as opposed to, say, cooking pots or fishing equipment). As a result, the Australian Museum has many weapons from the Massim (Milne Bay) Province, but for the purposes of the exhibition has borrowed three intricately carved *lagim* (splashboards) from *kula* canoes from the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery. These splashboards are interesting, not because of their antiquity but because they were described by Chief Narabutau of the Trobriand Islands, a *kula* participant who could recognise the skills of each carver and the correct alignment of each motif in the complete design. Unlike the flood of art criticism to which we are exposed in newspapers and magazines, such comment has rarely been made about objects in a museum collection by someone familiar with the social significance of pieces from his own society.

Pieces of Paradise will last for one year, in contrast with an exhibition such as the Abelam Gallery in the same museum, which will have a life of 10 years. However, Pieces of Paradise will be well supported with auxiliary programs. A colour catalogue illustrating 90 items will be published as a supplement to *Australian Natural History*, the Australian Museum Society's magazine. This has been designed as a low-cost production to enable it to be widely distributed, instead of preparing a more scholarly "coffee table" book commemorating the exhibition. The Society will conduct activities for the duration of the exhibition including a lecture series, special children's events and craft demonstrations and performances.

One significant part of the opening ceremony will be the return of an important artifact from the Australian Museum to each of Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. The museum is amenable to requests for the return of significant cultural material to its country of origin; each case is considered on its merits, and the museum has previously returned items to all these Pacific nations. □



Left: painstaking conservation has preserved important items, such as this vigorously carved gable from the Yuat River in the lower Sepik.

Top: Ironically, some aspects of the traditional art of the Pacific have been preserved by the tourist demand for "primitive" souvenirs.

Above: The apparently happy face of a Gulf shield contrasts with its bellicose function.

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ness world relationship. And, given the essential insularity of Japanese culture, it would be interesting to know more of the status of the Japanese Foreign Ministry in government and its influence in Japanese affairs generally.

With Indonesia, another giant neighbour, Papua New Guinea holds a regular "dialogue": Government officials, academics, journalists and businessmen get together in informal sessions and the views expressed and exchanged lead to a flow of information that is to the benefit of both governments in dealing with mutual problems. Perhaps the Foreign Ministry might consider a similar arrangement between Japan and Papua New Guinea and, even-

tually, between Japan and its Pacific neighbours as a whole.

As to the concern with image, the problem for Japan lies in the dichotomy between diplomatic and commercial interests. It is interesting to note that in the Southwest Pacific, with the sudden emergence of Russian fishing interests, the United States resolved the long-standing tuna issue by a package deal in which commercial fees were supplemented by an official aid component. Japan has refused a similar combined commercial/aid package with Papua New Guinea, insisting it wishes to keep the two discrete. Does that reflect the thinking in the Japanese Foreign Ministry, or does it signify the lat-

ter is overruled by more dominant interests at home?

My own belief is that, in the South Pacific at least (and especially with the expansion of a friendly Russia in the area), the Japanese Foreign Ministry will need to assert itself over Japanese commercial interests and if it is to retain any credibility in the eyes of smaller nations. I say that as a friend who would be delighted to see Japan provide a genuinely enlightened leadership for the island states in their struggle to develop their economies. □

Tony Siaguru is Leader of the League for National Advancement in Papua New Guinea.

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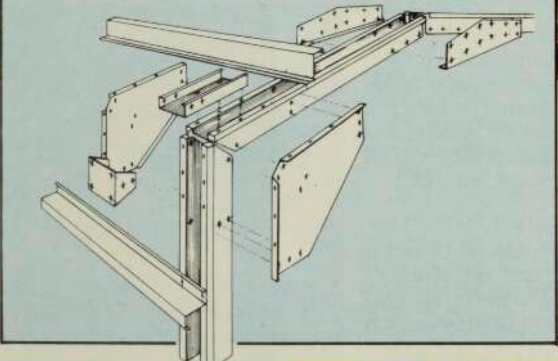


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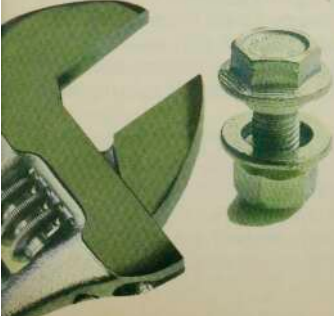
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