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In the colonial history of the Pacific, colonies and nuclear tests go together. Britain, France and the United States all chose island possessions to test their deadliest and dirtiest nuclear weapons. The tests have left a legacy of cultural destruction and radiation-induced illnesses among islanders, particularly in Micronesia. China, the United States and the Soviet Union have used the region for missile testing. Nuclear colonialism has spawned a people's movement for a nuclear-free and independent Pacific and a ten-year campaign for a nuclear-free zone. But the 1985 Rarotonga Treaty failed to adequately meet these aspirations.

The people of the Pacific have borne the brunt of nuclear colonialism — 'nuclearism' as Vanuatu Prime Minister Walter Lini describes it. Within three months of the nuclear devastation wrought on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, Washington opted to set up an atomic bomb testing programme on the remote atolls of Micronesia: a move that has had destructive consequences for the islanders for decades.

Situated in a vast expanse of ocean in the central Pacific, the more than 2000 islands of Micronesia have played a vital role in modern strategic history. Japanese aircraft launched their attack on Pearl Harbour from Micronesia, plunging the United States into the Second World War. And it was from Tinian Island in western Micronesia that the *Enola Gay* took off with its deadly weapons for the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki which ended the war and ushered in the nuclear age. The islands of Micronesia have been used by Washington ever since as pawns to enhance its strategic posture.¹

The Micronesians have also been subjected to more colonial rule than any other Pacific islanders. Spain 'discovered' the islands of Micronesia in the late sixteenth century, and since then the islands have been ruled by three successive colonial powers. Germany seized the Marshall Islands from Spain in 1885 and purchased the remaining islands at the end of

the century. Thirteen years later, the United States seized the Philippines and the island of Guam at the end of the Spanish-American War. Being the largest island of Micronesia, Guam has served United States strategic interests well, and was one of the launching pads for B52 bombing sorties during the Indochina War.

At the outbreak of the First World War, Japan captured the Micronesian islands from Germany, and later administered them under a League of Nations mandate. After the war Japanese economic expansion meant rapid changes throughout Micronesia. During the late 1930s, however, Japan violated its mandate by militarily fortifying several Pacific outposts, using Truk lagoon in the Caroline Islands as its Pearl Harbour.

The strategic importance of the islands was demonstrated during the Second World War. The bloody island-hopping battles of Kwajalein, Eniwetok, Truk, Tinian, Saipan and Peleliu left more than 6000 Americans dead and a further 22,000 wounded while Japanese casualties were far higher. Caught in a war they wanted no part of, an estimated 5000 Micronesians also lost their lives.²

At the end of the war, the US Naval Military Government took possession of the Japanese-mandated islands; in January 1946 it had selected Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands for the first series of nuclear tests — known as Operation Crossroads — to demonstrate the destructive capacity of its atomic bomb on a fleet of wartime warships. When the American military governor of the Marshalls, Commodore Ben Wyatt, went to Bikini to explain the action to the islanders, he told them the United States was testing nuclear bombs 'for the good of mankind and to end all world wars'.³ The islanders were then 'asked' to leave.

The public spectacle was staged on 1 and 25 July 1946 and was monitored by 42,000 military personnel and scientists — all men. Between 1946 and 1958, 66 atomic and hydrogen bombs shattered the Bikini and Eniwetok Atolls. Six islands were vaporised by nuclear weapons and the people of Rongelap and other atolls were irradiated. Many islanders claimed they were used as guinea pigs for the experiments. Now, more than 40 years after the first Bikini tests, many islands are still uninhabitable because of the high radiation levels while the Bikinians and Rongelap islanders remain exiled people.

In July 1947 Washington became the administering authority of the United Nations-sanctioned Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, the only 'strategic' trust of the 11 United Nations-supervised territories created after the war. The territory was divided into three geographical parts — the Marshall Islands, the Carolines (Kosrae, Pohnpei, Truk, Yao and Belau), and the Marianas Islands, including Guam, Saipan and Tinian.

After signing the trusteeship agreement, only the United States military paid any attention to Micronesia. The Marshall Islanders suffered most from the military occupation: a major supply base was set up at Kwajalein

with smaller command centres at Bikini and Eniwetok for the nuclear tests. Kwajalein also became a vital link in the supply route for American forces during the Korean War and later became a base for missile tests. In 1951 the Central Intelligence Agency set up a camp on Saipan which operated a secret training camp for nationalist guerrillas as part of an unsuccessful plan to invade the China mainland.

Micronesia was neglected during the 1950s: almost no money was provided for development. Roads, usually little more than riverbeds, were frequently impassable; electricity and water supply were erratic; and hospital and other social services were virtually non-existent. The Japanese-built buildings and infrastructure left after the wartime building were deliberately destroyed by United States forces after the war.⁴

With the other ten trusteeships becoming independent, and with an anti-colonial mood sweeping the world, the United States created a Congress of Micronesia in 1965 to silence United Nations criticism of the lack of political development. While the Micronesians now had a forum to air their concerns, the American High Commission frequently vetoed any decision made by their Congress.

Although the loss of Asian bases in the wake of the defeat in Vietnam revived strong Pentagon interest in establishing forward bases in Micronesia, the military policy of 'strategic denial' remained the crucial issue in political status negotiations between the United States and Micronesia. The trusteeship was split into four political entities — Mariana Islands (which opted to become a United States commonwealth) and the republics of Belau, Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands.

After 14 years of negotiations and four Washington administrations, a compromise between commonwealth and full independence — labelled 'free association' — was agreed to in principle by American and Micronesian negotiators in 1985. The Compact of Free Association is a complex legal document defining economic aid and foreign affairs provisions. It has involved compromises on both sides — but the islanders have been forced to do most of the compromising.

The main provisions include the power of the United States to maintain *permanent* 'strategic denial', or the authority to keep other nations out of Micronesia; 50-year military and nuclear rights in Belau (in spite of the islanders' overwhelming approval of a constitution which bans the entry of nuclear warships and weapons); and 30-year military use of Kwajalein Missile Range for continued testing and development of intercontinental ballistic missiles, anti-ballistic missile systems and space tracking (in spite of Kwajalein landowner demands that the term be limited to 15 years). In return, the Micronesian governments have the authority to run their internal *and* foreign affairs — but with qualifications.

Both the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands formally adopted the compact at the end of 1986; Belau remained the only state

thwarting the American plans to end the trusteeship while retaining military control. In spite of repeated referenda and a climate of increasing violence, the conflict between the compact's military and nuclear clauses and the nuclear-free constitution remained unresolved. Once the Belau document is constitutionally adopted, notes American researcher and commentator on Micronesian affairs Glenn Alcalay, the United States will have consolidated its western Pacific strategic flank in the 'ingeniously-crafted' compact agreement. But he adds:

Instead of peace and prosperity, the US has used the picturesque isles of Micronesia for achieving a military escalation in a precarious world. As Ezra Leban from Aitrik Atoll said to me a few years ago, 'Now I have to take a pill every day until I die. The US came to our islands and threw bombs at us, and now we are slowly dying.'⁵

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Although Britain tested atomic devices in the Pacific in the 1950s and 60s, it later abandoned its nuclear role in the region. France, however, embarked on a policy of nuclear colonialism like the United States. And while the Americans began to absorb some of the lessons from the devastation they had caused in the Marshall Islands, France ignored the Partial Test Ban Treaty and chose two atolls for its own atmospheric tests.

French nuclear involvement in the South Pacific stems from two distinct but closely linked policies — the decision to have an independent nuclear deterrent, and the decision to remain a middle-ranked global military power. But unlike the Americans, France began nuclear tests in the Pacific in 1966 only because it was forced to abandon the Reggane test site in the Sahara as a result of Algerian independence. When France ended atmospheric tests in 1974 after growing protests from South Pacific nations, there was no evidence to indicate it needed to continue underground tests at Moruroa. In fact, had France conducted underground tests from the beginning it would have seriously needed to consider other options within metropolitan France. The Australian government declared in 1986 that it had surveyed possible test sites in France, finding the Guerét area, the Margeride and Corsica all suitable. But France opted to continue testing at Moruroa and Fangataufa Atolls, having already set up the costly test centre in Polynesia.

There are many flaws in the French strategy. Carrying out the tests in the Pacific, for example, does not make France a 'Pacific power' in a full military sense. In reality, France has been using its political grip on Polynesia to serve a defence strategy with its priorities based on the other side of the globe — in Europe, where France regards West Germany as the major potential flashpoint in any conflict with the Soviet Union. As French historian Professor Jean Chesneaux puts it:

France is an outsider in the Pacific. In the military sense, Moruroa is an enclave and not a true military base, as is the US base at Subic Bay in the Philippines. It is very likely that when they realised this situation, French authorities, very late, decided to build in New Caledonia a genuine military base with submarines, aircraft-carriers and Jaguar aircraft.⁵

Also, there is little evidence to suggest that *la bombe* gives France any more diplomatic or political clout internationally. In few world crises — whether Afghanistan, Chad, Lebanon, Nicaragua or Vietnam — has France been able to speak with any more authority than countries such as Australia, Italy or West Germany.

Yet the bomb is a vital symbol of French nationalism, the country's passport to 'independence' from the superpowers. This nationalist appeal is as strong among politicians of the Left as it is for those of the Right. Since 1958, when France decided to develop its own nuclear capability, Gaullism in defence policy has become a key factor in the French political consensus. No French government could rule without the nuclear strategy being a cornerstone of its policy. According to President Mitterrand's first Prime Minister, Pierre Mauroy: 'France's strategic nuclear forces have the capacity, even after an enemy first strike, to retaliate with a very high degree of credibility and to inflict damage in excess of the demographic and economic potential we present.'

Likewise, Moruroa has become a symbol of French determination to assert its independence from superpowers. New Caledonia gained greater nuclear strategic importance in 1985 with the first visit there by a French nuclear attack submarine, the *Rubis*. Other visits could follow if Nouméa's Port Denouel is expanded as a base for aircraft-carriers and nuclear submarines.

The visit and increased port calls by French warships among independent Pacific states is regarded as evidence of growing collaboration between France and the United States in the region — a reversal of de Gaulle's 1967 decision for France to pull out of NATO. With the third largest nuclear force after the United States and the Soviet Union, France has increasingly co-operated with the Americans in recent years. It has made use of American computers, sold to France in 1982, which have been used in developing new nuclear warheads.⁸

The People's Charter

The grassroots Pacific anti-nuclear movement was launched at the first Nuclear-Free Pacific conference at Suva in April 1975, backed by the Against Tests on Moruroa (ATOM) committee which had been formed in 1970.

It consisted of people from the Pacific Theological College, the University of the South Pacific and the Fiji YWCA. The committee was merged into the Pacific People's Action Front in the mid-1970s and then the movement went into decline.⁹ It surfaced again as the Fiji Anti-Nuclear Group (FANG) in 1983. Other Pacific anti-nuclear groups existed already but the Suva conference established a Pacific-wide network.

This movement proved to be a major factor in persuading Pacific governments to take a stronger nuclear-free stand and shaping public awareness and opinion throughout the region. A draft People's Charter for a Nuclear-Free Pacific was produced at Suva and influenced the then New Zealand Prime Minister Norman Kirk to call for a nuclear-free zone treaty at the 1975 South Pacific Forum — an ideal that took a decade to be realised. After the draft charter was reaffirmed at a second conference in Pohnpei in 1978, the third meeting two years later at Kaitua, Hawaii, expanded the group's identity as the Nuclear-Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) movement. Resource centres were set up in Honolulu and Port Vila. The fourth — and biggest — congress was held in Port Vila during 1983 in recognition of the Vanuatu Government's support for a *niukhia fri pasifik*, as it is expressed in pidgin.

'Vanuatu is not seeking *only* a nuclear-free Pacific,' Deputy Prime Minister Sethy Regenvanu told delegates at the opening. 'We are seeking a Pacific . . . free of every last remnant of colonialism. But freedom and independence will have no meaning if our very existence is threatened by the constant fear of total destruction.' The People's Charter for a Nuclear-Free and Independent Pacific, adopted in Hawaii and reaffirmed in Vila, declared:

We, the people of the Pacific, have been victimised too long by foreign powers. The Western imperialistic and colonial powers invaded our defenceless region, they took over our lands and subjugated our people to their whims. This form of alien colonial, political and military domination unfortunately persists as an evil cancer in some of our native territories such as Tahiti-Polynesia, Kanaky, Australia and Aotearoa. Our environment continues to be despoiled by foreign powers developing nuclear weapons for a strategy of warfare that has no winners, no liberators and imperils the survival of all humankind.

We . . . will assert ourselves and wrest control over the destiny of our nations and our environment from foreign powers, including transnational corporations. We note in particular the recent racist roots of the world's nuclear powers and we call for an immediate end to the oppression, exploitation and subordination of the indigenous people of the Pacific.¹⁰

The nuclear-free zone envisaged in the charter would embrace Micronesia, the Philippines, Japan and Hawaii as well as the original South Pacific Forum nations and would ban nuclear weapons even on board ships. NFIP campaigners support the Kanak struggle; oppose the Indonesian government's policy of transmigration in West Papua; denounce the presence of

United States military bases in the Philippines; endorse a protest against the dumping of nuclear waste in the Pacific; condemn the use of Kwajalein Atoll for the testing of the MX and other missiles; call for an end to the mining of uranium; and support Belau's nuclear-free constitution. 'Critics say the movement demands such a radical change in the security relationships of Pacific countries that it is doomed to irrelevance,' noted historian Stewart Firth. 'But this is to misunderstand the power and status of the nuclear-free idea in the Pacific Islands.'¹¹

Grassroots actions have contributed boldly to the NFIP campaign. Several Greenpeace protest voyages to Moruroa climaxed with the French sabotage of the *Rainbow Warrior*. In 1982, a 'sail-in' by more than 1000 island landowners on Kwajalein Atoll forced the United States military to shut down missile testing there for five months. The same year, the Australian-based yacht *Pacific Peacemaker* embarked on a voyage across the Pacific, supporting a Waitangi Day protest by Maori activists in New Zealand; protesting at Moruroa — where it was rammed by a French Navy minesweeper; visiting Kaho'olawe (the US Navy's Hawaiian target island); and taking part in a blockade of the arrival of the Trident submarine at Puget Sound.

The Port Vila NFIP conference ended with a traditional taro planting ceremony, intended to symbolise unity. Mary Lini, wife of the Vanuatu Prime Minister, dug in a plant representing the nation on tribal land while other women delegates planted on behalf of other Pacific countries.

'Unity of the people in our efforts to protect cultural and traditional values is important,' said Roman Bedor of Belau. 'After all, Pacific people have cooperative, not competitive, societies.' But unity was an elusive quality for delegates who were faced by a series of rifts.

Even Bedor, however, was forced to admit the conference became seriously torn by tension as delegates faced several difficult issues. One faction favoured splitting the conference so that only indigenous people were involved, with *bakeha, haole, palagi* and *popa'a* being excluded.¹² Other delegates believed the conference was not radical enough and would not confront the vital sovereignty questions confronting indigenous people in the Pacific rim countries. It was an issue which continued to bedevil the NFIP movement for the next three years and came close to provoking a split after the Fijian coup d'état. A partial solution was worked out by staging an exclusively indigenous caucus before the opening session of the November 1987 conference at Manila.

'Uncle' Harry Mitchell, a 67-year-old indigenous Hawaiian from the Kaho'olawe 'Ohana movement, summed up the Port Vila mood: 'We must stop the nuclear evil,' he said. 'It has been forced down our throats by the angels — US, Britain and France — the angels with the dirty faces. The sea is our bread basket . . . and the ocean our ice box.

'The best thing we Hawaiians ever did was get rid of Captain Cook.'¹³



Anti-nuclear protesters at Independence Park in Port Vila during the fourth Nuclear-Free and Independent Pacific conference, 1983

David Robie

The Rarotonga Treaty

Although the grassroots movements began the campaign for a nuclear-free Pacific, they found its progress slow. A year after Fiji abruptly decided in July 1983 to scuttle part of its popular anti-nuclear stance and allow American nuclear-armed and powered warships into its ports, United States Ambassador Fred Eckert completed his Suva assignment well satisfied. He could claim that he had successfully wooed Fiji's leaders to adopt a position acceptable to American interests. But just over three years later, his accomplishment seemed under threat. The South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty (SPNFZ, or 'Spinfizz' as American officials dubbed it), was formally tabled at the United Nations, and the conservative government of Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara faced a challenge from a rising new anti-nuclear political force. The new Fiji Labour Party was turning the country's politics upside down. It supported New Zealand's stand and planned to reimpose the port ban.

The Soviet Union has no time in gaining favour with several South Pacific nations by putting its signature to the nuclear-free treaty's protocols; the United States refused. On 11 December 1986, the SPNFZ treaty took effect under international law when Australia became the eighth South Pacific Forum member to ratify it. The Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Niue, Tuvalu and Western Samoa had already ratified the document. The treaty prohibits nuclear testing, the dumping of nuclear waste and the presence on land of nuclear weapons in an area stretching from the west coast of Australia almost to Easter Island, off Chile, and from north of Kiribati to about 3000 km south of New Zealand. The zone adjoins the boundaries of the Antarctic and Tlatelolco (Latin America) nuclear-free treaties.

Next day a Soviet Embassy official in Canberra telephoned Henry Naisali, director of the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation (SPEC) in Suva. Moscow had already made it clear several months before that it planned to formally recognise the treaty. Now the question was brief and to the point. Where and when, asked the official, could Dr Evgeny Samoteikin, the Soviet Ambassador to Australia and Fiji, sign the document?

'Here and now,' replied Naisali. Two days later Ambassador Samoteikin flew to Suva and on Monday, December 15, signed two of the three protocols that the Forum had invited the five nuclear powers to accept. 'It's a pleasure and honour to sign them,' said Samoteikin, while noting Moscow still had reservations. Naisali welcomed the signature as evidence of international support for the South Pacific's desire to keep the region free of 'nuclear terror'. He described the treaty as 'perhaps the most noteworthy advance in international nuclear disarmament' in the past decade. But, noted the conservative *Economist* rather cynically: 'The Russians could not resist signing Spinfizz. It has enabled them to make a peace-loving gesture without offering a single rouble.'¹⁴

The first protocol applies only to nuclear powers with dependencies in the Pacific — Britain, France and the United States. It asks them to refrain from using the Pacific islands colonies as nuclear weapons bases or testing grounds. The two other protocols require the five recognised nuclear weapons states to refrain from using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against any treaty members and to refrain from testing nuclear explosive devices anywhere in the zone. In signing the protocols, though, the Soviet Union can take advantage of an escape clause which allows any signatory to withdraw with three months' notice.

On 10 February 1987, less than two months after the Russians, the Chinese ambassador to Fiji, Ji Chaozhu, also signed the protocols. But he said the South Pacific could be nuclear-free only if the other big powers accepted their 'special responsibility'.

France, predictably, and Britain joined the United States in refusing to sign the protocols; France showed its contempt by triggering a ten-kilotonne test in the South Pacific on 7 December 1986 — the day Australia's Federal Parliament ratified the treaty and four days before it took effect. Shortly afterwards the Reagan administration made it clear it would not sign.

In February France's State Secretary for Pacific Affairs, Gaston Flosse, visited Washington and later boasted about his success. He had met Secretary of State George Shultz, 'whom I persuaded not to sign the Rarotonga Treaty'. Annoyed by his statement, New Zealand Prime Minister David Lange retaliated by cancelling a state visit by Flosse to New Zealand that had been scheduled for the following month. Lange cited the resignation by Flosse the week before from his other job as president of the Tahitian government as the major reason; Flosse had been invited as an elected representative of the Tahitian people.

Flosse, aged 55, is a part-Tahitian and among the wealthiest men of Polynesia. He is the architect of a French Government attempt to regain credibility in the South Pacific through aid and political contact. (His visit to New Zealand would have been the first by a French cabinet minister since the *Rainbow Warrior* bombing.) Flosse also leads the conservative *Tahoeraa Huraa* (Rally of the People) party, which was in power at the time.*

Tahoeraa is the Tahitian political party most sympathetic — most are opposed — to French nuclear tests in the Gambiers. 'All precautions are being taken,' he said. 'Moruroa Atoll will not be another Bikini.'

* Flosse's party, *Tahoeraa Huraa*, was re-elected to office on 16 March 1986 with 22 seats in the 41-seat Territorial Assembly, the first party to gain an outright majority in Tahiti for 30 years. Gaston Flosse was appointed State Secretary for Pacific Affairs three days later, the first Pacific islander to be included in a French cabinet. A \$3 million South Pacific fund for aid and co-operation was provided, and it was doubled by the end of 1987.

Both suave and abrasive, Flosse is impatient with Lange's nuclear-free policy and other Pacific nations' criticism of France. 'I don't understand the real reasons for their criticism and opposition to nuclear testing,' he said. 'Let me be precise. We do not manufacture the bomb at Moruroa. Moruroa is a laboratory 500 to 600 metres deep. The military are not the sole beneficiaries. All the engineers are civil, and civil research benefits. What really is the opposition being voiced? It is hazardous to the health of the population? Or is it introducing disorder to this part of the world?'¹⁵

The most vocal Forum opponents of the treaty — Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea* and the Solomon Islands — argue that it does not make the South Pacific a nuclear weapons-free zone at all since it permits treaty countries to continue to make individual decisions about letting their sea and airports be used for brief periods by nuclear weapons-carrying aircraft and warships. This feature of the treaty was included on the insistence of Australia, which wanted a treaty that would not restrict any nuclear activities by its most important ally and protector, the United States. Besides Australia and Fiji, the other Pacific countries which are prepared to entertain the US Navy are Tonga and Western Samoa.

'In the final analysis,' asked *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 'what good is a nuclear-free zone not recognised by the nuclear powers? Or, for that matter, one that is not recognised by all the Forum countries?' The magazine said that to some critics it was an 'empty gesture' and to others it was an effort by a frustrated minority, a plea to be left alone by larger nations.¹⁶

On 18 May 1986, just two months before the SPNFZ treaty was approved by the Forum at Suva, Lange made an enthusiastic but qualified endorsement of it while opening the Pacific Trade Union Forum conference at Auckland. 'Embrace it as the start,' he said. 'Let's draw back from the brink and don't let us lose the chance of this move which is a very significant extension of the [Nuclear] Non-Proliferation Treaty. Don't let us see that sabotaged. Some people say they want nirvana at the first port of call, but I'm afraid we're not going to get there.' Delegates warmly applauded Lange, and conference chairman James Raman, of Fiji, told the Prime Minister he had given people of the Pacific great hope.

To many of the more outspoken anti-nuclear unionists present, however, and to some cynical Pacific government officials and peace activists, Lange's words failed to allay the suspicions they had entertained about the treaty long before details had become public. Indeed, since the Norman Kirk proposal was revived by Australia at the Tuvalu meeting of the Forum in 1984 there was good reason to be suspicious: it seemed that the treaty was being promoted by Canberra as a way of deflecting attention from the pro-uranium, pro-nuclear weapon policies of the Hawke government. But the treaty's supporters argued that at least it prevented the nuclear status quo from deteriorating.

*In spite of its reservations, Papua New Guinea signed the document.

'All treaties spell mischief for someone,' said the *Economist*. 'But Spinifizz seems less troublesome than most. Its beauty is that signing it amounts to little more than saying you are against nuclear war in the South Pacific.' It had been a 'godsend, if that is the word' for Hawke, added the magazine. 'It enables him to give the nod to the anti-nuclear instincts of his Labor Party without interfering with his defence promises to the Americans.'¹⁷

The treaty's flaws

Eight of the 13 Forum leaders signed the historic treaty in the Rarotonga Hotel in the Cook Islands on 6 August 1985, the 40th anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing. The signatories were Australia (Prime Minister Bob Hawke), Cook Islands (Prime Minister Sir Thomas Davis), Fiji (Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamise Mara), Kiribati (President Ieremia Tabai), New Zealand (Prime Minister David Lange), Niue (Premier Sir Robert Rex), Tuvalu (Prime Minister Dr Tomasi Puapua) and Western Samoa (Prime Minister Tofilau Eti). But the ink was barely dry before dissent within the Forum became public. A day after, the conference spokesman, David Lange, assured journalists that all Forum members would sign the document, Vanuatu Prime Minister Walter Lini declared his country would *not* — at least until the treaty was more watertight.

Vanuatu is committed to remaining totally free of all nuclear weapons. It imposed a port ban on United States nuclear ships in 1982, two years before New Zealand. The treaty was 'not comprehensive, it is partial' and not what Pacific Islanders wanted, Lini said. He predicted that the region's churches, academic institutions and peace activists would continue to promote a comprehensive treaty. If governments were seen to be ignoring their true wishes, there would be a loss of 'confidence and credibility in the democratic institutions' of the region. Lini cited Australia's uranium exports and the fact that the treaty would leave foreign nuclear warships free to roam the region at will and enter ports that welcome them as key flaws in the document.

Fiji's Ratu Mara, like Hawke, wanted to preserve good military and trade relations with the United States and was prepared to accept nuclear warships. He stressed that the Australian Prime Minister had clearly argued the case for the treaty. 'No counter argument was heard,' Mara said. 'It satisfies the wishes of the majority of the people of the Pacific, but what happens if a war breaks out? I don't know.'

Like many anti-nuclear activists and campaigners, however, New Zealand peace researcher Owen Wilkes believes the 'partial' treaty with loopholes has not lessened the urgency of establishing a comprehensive nuclear-free zone. 'The Aotearoa Peace Movement has been suspicious of the treaty

since well before the details became public,' he argues, 'and, indeed, ever since it was first mooted by Australia at the 1983 Forum meeting in Tuvalu.

There were some good reasons to be suspicious.'¹⁸

Wilkes attacks, in particular, the promotion of the treaty by Australia as a way of deflecting attention from the pro-uranium, pro-nuclear war policies of the Hawke government. Among treaty flaws he cites:

1. *It fails to ban or even restrict the transit of nuclear weapons in any way.* Nuclear powers are still free to cruise anywhere in the zone with submarines loaded with Trident missiles, ships loaded with Tomahawk cruise missiles and so on. Any nation within the zone is free to invite nuclear-armed ships or aircraft to visit its ports and airfields — as long as the ships and aircraft are not 'stationed' there.

2. *It does not ban the testing of ballistic missiles intended to carry nuclear warheads.* By far the biggest contribution the Pacific makes to the arms race is as a testing ground for intercontinental and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (ICBMs and SLBMs). The United States tests its MX from Vandenberg Air Base, California, to Kwajalein Atoll and to various 'broad ocean area' target zones elsewhere. The Soviet Union test-flies its missiles into the North Pacific and occasionally into the South Pacific. The Chinese have also made tests into the South Pacific.

3. *It does not ban facilities which are part of nuclear war systems and networks.* It leaves untouched such nuclear support facilities as the North-West Cape transmitter in western Australia which is used to communicate with missile submarines; the electronic spy satellite base at Pine Gap; and the missile early warning satellite ground station at Nurrungar (all in Australia).

4. *The zone does not cover Micronesia.* The Micronesians are the Pacific people whose lives have been the most affected by nuclear war preparations. They have been forced to play host to United States atmospheric nuclear tests at Bikini and Eniwetok, to US missile tests at Kwajalein and elsewhere, to US missile storage, Polaris basing, and B52 operations at Guam. And they have had to yield substantial portions of Belau, Saipan and Tinian for the future requirements of the United States military should it be forced to withdraw from the Philippines. The republic of Belau has been denied a nuclear-free constitution by the United States. The Marshall Islanders live downwind of the mothballed United States atmospheric nuclear test facilities at Johnston Island* — which is also outside the zone. (Both the republics of the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands became members of the South Pacific Forum during 1987.)

5. *The treaty fails to prevent Australian uranium being used for weapons production.* Australia is already subject to NPT-IAEA safeguards, so

little is gained by reaffirming these in the treaty. The safeguards make it difficult, but not impossible, for Australian uranium to end up in nuclear warheads. Only a total ban on uranium mining would guarantee that this could not happen.

6. *The treaty will not prevent non-signatories from dumping nuclear waste within the zone.* The treaty partners, however, are prevented from helping them dump (and Protocol II apparently prevents nuclear powers from dumping). Palmyra Island, the most likely possibility for United States long-term, high-level waste storage, has been carefully left just outside the zone.

'After such a dismal catalogue of deficiencies one is left wondering if there are any good things about the treaty at all,' says Wilkes. 'There are. The treaty does prevent the spread of nuclear weapons into South Pacific countries which are currently free of them — let us be thankful for small mercies.' But, adds Wilkes, the treaty would not prevent France deploying nuclear weapons in New Caledonia, since New Caledonia is not free to join the Forum and France has refused to sign Protocol I.

The treaty does ban nuclear tests on the territory of the signatories, and it bans states from testing anywhere else in the zone. It does not, however, hamper French testing at Moruroa. It has also become impossible, in theory at least, to guarantee the secrecy of military installations on the territory of treaty members. Wilkes adds:

[The treaty should not be condemned] as useless or worse than useless. Of course it does much less than we would have hoped for, but on the other hand it is a treaty which is being signed, and it does bring into being some useful bans. It is a useful tool to use in the campaign against French testing. It is an inspiration within the South Pacific to achieve more comprehensive bans . . .

Let us emphasise that it is a partial nuclear-free zone treaty, and always

* South-west of Hawaii, Johnston is also probably the most bizarre United States military installation in the Pacific. It is an aircraft carrier-shaped (and not much larger) islet artificially created on the atoll's coral reef. This is where the United States does everything that is 'too dangerous, too secret, or too unpopular to do anywhere else in the Pacific'. It is particularly suited to activities involving hazardous substances because, although less than two hours' flying time from Hawaii, the constant north-east tradewinds ensure that all chemical or radioactive fallout heads away from the United States and towards other places and people — in particular the Marshall Islands.

Eighteen million litres of dioxin-contaminated Agent Orange defoliant left over from the Vietnam War were stored on the atoll. The defoliant was burned there, just offshore, on board the Dutch-owned *Vulcanus I*. The island presently hosts several thousand tonnes of old and leaky nerve gas and mustard gas munitions. The army is building a land-based incinerator plant to dispose of this and plans to bring more old chemical weaponry to the atoll as it becomes too dangerous to store or burn elsewhere.

call it a partial zone, to empire still seeking a comprehensive or total zone.¹⁹

Pacific countries which joined Vigning the treaty at Rarotonga were Nauru, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Nauru and Papua New Guinea expressed the treaty in principle but said constitutional processes had before they could formally become party to it. Tonga and Islands indicated similar positions. But by the end of 1979 Guinea's Michael Somare, who was strong on anti-nuclear, heavily influenced by Ratu Mara, had been replaced as PM by his former deputy, Piasa Wingiti, and both Port Moresby and Port Vila in taking a harder line towards the treaty.

Several Pacific nations tried against Australian and New Zealand opposition to push their provisions while the treaty was being drafted.²⁰ The ban stationing of nuclear weapons was promoted as one of the treaties, something which would stop any future United States nuclear weapons on Australian territory or use that country's (Cockburn Sound) as a home port.

Both Papua New Guinea sought a definition of permanent stationing that would include length and frequency of nuclear armed ship visits. They were Australia and others on the drafting committee. From 1981 nuclear-armed submarines were present in Cockburn Sound and at the time, yet Hawke said this would not be a violation of stationing provision. It would be possible for the Unstore nuclear weapons on an auxiliary supply ship for most of the Cockburn sound area, and to have nuclear-armed ships periodically to be resupplied — without breaking the treaty. In 1984 the frequency of visits had slowed and there were no 87-88.

Nauru, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu tried to persuade Australia to include nuclear missile testing in Protocol III of the treaty, which cover weapons testing. But, says researcher Michael Hamel-Gres rejected by Australia.

Nauru and Vanuatu also sought uranium exports. Again Australia blocked the island nations, its uranium exports were safeguarded and destined for use only. This argument ignored the weaknesses in existing safe intimate relationship between the spread of the civilian nuclear the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Over nuclear waste-dumping, Guinea tried to strengthen the treaty by including a fourth would require all potential nuclear waste-dumping countries, Japan, the Soviet Union

and the United States) not to dump on land or in the seas in the region. This was overruled on the ground that another treaty was being negotiated under the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme which could accomplish the same end. (France and the United States endorsed the treaty which includes a ban on dumping radioactive waste within 200-mile offshore zones; Japan did not.) Anti-nuclear campaigners, however, claim France already stores some low-level waste at Moruroa and nothing in the Rarotonga Treaty (or the SPREP convention) prevents this.

Both Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu argued for the nuclear-free zone to be based on the boundary lines of the South Pacific Commission — including the Micronesian nations north of the equator, Belau, Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands. This was rejected because 'inclusion of the United States trust territory in the zone could complicate current negotiations on the constitutional future of these territories,' especially since nuclear issues were a major element in these negotiations.

But these considerations did not appear to apply in the case of French territories in the South Pacific where the issues facing independence movements were regarded as 'different'.²¹ Yet the FLNKS and all the Tahitian parties seeking independence are opposed to French nuclear testing. The FLNKS also mounted protests against the visit of the French nuclear submarine *Rubis* to Nouméa during 1985. And the nuclear concerns of states such as Belau and Federated States of Micronesia seem to specially qualify them for the zone. Treaty critics regard failure to include the Micronesian countries as a gesture to the United States which betrayed the nuclear-free aspirations of many Micronesians.

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Walter Lini was the first Pacific leader to warn that he would not sign the treaty at the 1986 Forum meeting in Suva. Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands — the latter having declared a port ban on nuclear ships in 1983, the year before New Zealand — announced they would join Vanuatu in criticising the treaty's weaknesses. Both the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu go further than New Zealand; they also ban nuclear ships from territorial waters.

During July, at a three-day meeting at Goroka, in the Papua New Guinea highlands, the foreign ministers of the three Melanesian countries discussed nuclear and independence issues. They agreed to approach the Suva meeting with a common front over Kanaky, the treaty and other issues. Their meeting was followed by another one, also in Papua New Guinea, of Wingiti, Lini and Deputy Prime Minister Ezekiel Alebua of the Solomons (he became prime minister by the end of the year) in which they had endorsed the earlier decisions and heralded the formation of the Melanesian Spearhead Group. At the Forum, the 'troika' reaffirmed their stand that the treaty

needed to be completely reviewed to ban *all* nuclear weapons from the region in all circumstances before they would sign it.

Tonga was also hesitant, but for opposite reasons. Although Tonga signed the treaty at Rarotonga and was expected to eventually ratify it, Crown Prince Tupouto'a had remarked at Forum meetings that Tonga wanted to be free to 'host the entire might' of the United States Navy in its ports should it ever wish it as an insurance for its own security. Kiribati, Nauru and Western Samoa were among countries that thought the treaty was at least a beginning.

Melanesian countries were disappointed in New Zealand's stand which they thought to be inconsistent with its own port ban. 'It's hard to understand Lange; to us he is rather hypocritical,' said a senior Vanuatu government official. 'We wonder just what really is behind his nuclear-free rhetoric. Vanuatu is deeply committed to its role as a nuclear-free country. Our country would never sell out on our principles like New Zealand has over the treaty.'

New Zealand came in for bitter criticism from the Fiji Labour Party too. Attacking the treaty as a 'useless document' for preventing nuclear activities in the region, party leader Dr Timoci Bavadra described the protocol's escape clause as a farce.²² He also rebuked Lange for commenting that France was not disliked in the South Pacific.

'Actually there is *hared* of France because its policies are bent on genocide of the South Pacific people,' Bavadra said. 'I'm surprised that Lange can say this only a year after the *Rainbow Warrior* was sunk by French agents. We have no intention of compromising our nuclear-free stand. But it weakens our position if New Zealand becomes two-faced.'²³

Bavadra added that such comments coming from a person of Lange's status would do little to comfort Pacific people who had been looking to the Forum with some hope. 'Apparently, decisions made in the Forum are clearly individual decisions of leaders of the countries and not that of the people.'

The treaty was overshadowed at the Suva Forum by a decision to ask the United Nations Decolonisation Committee to add New Caledonia to the list of colonies kept under scrutiny as candidates for independence. After five years of lobbying by the FLNKS to take such a step, the Forum finally lost patience with France. It declared grave disappointment about the 'significant backward step' in New Caledonia since the conservative government of Prime Minister Jacques Chirac had won power in March 1986. Both the Kanaks and the Forum saw the situation as leading to an inevitable resurgence of political violence.

Forum support for Kanaky was a triumph for Walter Lini who had been a lone voice championing the Kanak cause. Unlike the mostly conservative Polynesian leaders, Walter Lini has a clear grasp of the connection between nuclear testing and colonialism in the Pacific: both

'are part of the same evil', he says. 'To eradicate this evil from our region I believe that we have to deal with it from its root, which is colonialism itself. Unless French Polynesia becomes independent France will continue to use it to test its nuclear bombs . . . The same is true of the Marshall Islands.'²⁴

Only one country argued against taking New Caledonia to the United Nations: the Cook Islands. Ironically, though, France bitterly criticised the Cook Islands as well as the Forum for finally petitioning the United Nations. 'It was unfair,' complained Cook Islands Foreign Minister Norman George. He blamed the French Pacific Office in Papeete, headed by State Secretary Flosse, for the criticism. 'They've been off-beam for a long time,' George said. 'If whatever moves they make don't succeed, they don't ask for the facts, they just make [them] up. They know what we faced: it was one against 13.'²⁵ Flosse was particularly bitter because it was the second year in a row he had been rejected while trying to gain observer status for Tahiti at the Forum.

The maverick Walter Lini called a press conference to proclaim that the Forum should now back Tahitian independence. As well, he called for other Forum nations to join Vanuatu in the Non-aligned Movement; to support independence in East Timor and Wallis and Futuna; and to recognise revolutionary groups such as the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the South-West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO). Lange reacted sharply, saying if the Vanuatu leader succeeded in turning the Forum into a mini-United Nations, then New Zealand, at least, would withdraw.

Most Polynesian nations were unimpressed. 'I'd rather liberate the poor people [of the Pacific],' snapped George. But Lini's views were echoed by the Forum's secretariat which warned in a report that the organisation must take a firmer stand on issues to strengthen its solidarity. If it failed to take the initiative, the report argued, the region would have to accept that in the twenty-first century it would have no more real control over its destiny than it had in the nineteenth. The secretariat reminded everyone that small is not necessarily powerless and that Lini was arguing for the region to stand tall in a new era for the Pacific.²⁶

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The flaws in the Rarotonga Treaty have given the island states some hard lessons. In spite of its symbolism and the nuclear-free consensus portrayed to the rest of the world, the tiny nations have little hope of curbing the expansion of American and French nuclear colonialism. The ambivalent role of Australia — and even New Zealand which wanted to avoid any further confrontation with the United States over its own anti-nuclear legislation — has been an important factor in compromising the treaty. It is not surprising that countries such as Vanuatu should look to the Non-

Aligned Movement and other international forums to seek broad-based Third World support. As *Vanuaku Pati* secretary-general Barak Sope put it:

In the past the colonialists wanted our labour, so they kidnapped us. Then they wanted our land, so they stole it from us for their plantations. Now they want our sea for the dumping of nuclear waste, testing of nuclear missiles and passage of submarines. The Trident submarine may be a far cry from a blackbirding vessel, but to us they are both ships from the same fleet. That is why Vanuatu is opposing nuclear colonialism in the Pacific.²⁷

Three examples of 'nuclear terrorism' in particular have shown the impotence of the Pacific nations when the chips are down: the subversion of Belau's nuclear-free constitution, the assassination of the country's President, and the sabotage of the *Rainbow Warrior* at Auckland.