

## NEW CALEDONIA 1993

At the beginning of 1993, it was becoming increasingly apparent that the March elections would give the Right a comfortable majority in the National Assembly in Paris. In New Caledonia, the position the new majority would take on the Matignon Accords was the subject of much speculation. Signed in 1988 by the *Front de libération nationale kanak et socialiste* (FLNKS, representing various pro-independence factions), the *Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République* (RPCR, the major loyalist group), and the French national government, the accords had been soundly denounced by a large portion of the Right.

As it turned out, however, new Minister for Overseas Territories Dominique Perben was quick to confirm that the process begun with the accords would continue. He said New Caledonia was the only overseas territory of France where things seemed to be going well and, in spite of the difficult economic situation in France, there was no reason to reduce metropolitan support for the ongoing effort. During his June visit to the territory, the minister reaffirmed his government's commitment to continuing in the direction set by the accords.

In the March legislative elections, nine candidates were listed for the first electoral district (Noumea, the three municipalities of the Loyalty Islands, and the Isle of Pines), and six for the second (the other twenty-seven municipalities of the main island). While the sheer number of candidates had led most observers to expect that a second

round of voting would be needed, the two incumbents, both members of the RPCR, were reelected after the first round. Jacques Lafleur obtained 53.27 percent of the vote in the first electoral district, and Maurice Nenou 54.15 percent in the second. Voter turnout was relatively low, with only 57.8 percent of the registered voters casting ballots.

Within the FLNKS there was much debate about whether the long-standing policy of boycotting national elections should be continued or abandoned. For several months *Union calédonienne*, the largest party within the FLNKS, had been advocating a resumption of participation in national elections, and it managed to win the support of two of the smaller parties, *Union progressiste mélanésienne* and *Parti socialiste kanak*. Meanwhile, *Parti de libération kanak* (PALIKA) maintained its earlier position and continued to encourage its members to abstain from voting. However, it did consent to the use of the FLNKS label by the two pro-independence candidates who entered the race.

FLNKS Vice-President Rock Wamytan obtained 14.32 percent of the vote in the first electoral district, and President of North Province Léopold Jorédié won 29.81 percent in the second district. The FLNKS had counted on a better showing, and PALIKA leaders argued that the poor results reflected voters' opinions regarding the running of the North and Loyalty Islands provinces by pro-independence factions.

*Mouvement des calédoniens libres*, a splinter group of the RPCR founded in early January 1993 by former Senator Dick Ukeiwe, and a political party in

ORSTOM Fonds Documentaire

N° : 43302 ep 1

Cote : B

its own right since its members were expelled from the RPCR, presented two candidates: Dick Ukeiwe and Justin Guillemard. In earlier provincial elections, Guillemard had represented a small anti-independence party called *Calédonie demain* (Caledonia Tomorrow), which fielded two candidates of its own in the 1993 national elections. For the territory as a whole, *Mouvement des Calédoniens Libres* obtained 12.46 percent of the votes. In the first electoral district, its candidate won 16 percent of the votes, placing second, ahead of the pro-independence candidate.

The elections also offered an opportunity to reassess *Union Océanienne*, which largely represents migrants from Wallis and Futuna, following its split into two factions in 1992. The factions presented one candidate each in both electoral districts, although all ran under the *Union Océanienne* banner. Overall, *Union Océanienne* appears to have maintained its position, gathering 4.2 percent of the vote compared with the 3.9 percent achieved in the 1989 provincial elections held shortly after the party was founded. The dissident faction, led by Aloisio Sako and leaning toward a pro-independence position, collected 1255 votes. The more centrist faction led by Michel Hema, president of the party before the schism, won only 943.

The dispute between Mayor of Lifou Cono Hamu and the traditional chiefly authorities, which has been ongoing for several years, appears to have been resolved during 1993. The incumbent mayor failed to get the support of his party, *Union Calédonienne*,

when elections were called following the resignation of several municipal councillors. Cono Hamu ran anyway, and his faction took the lead after the first round of voting, with 23 percent of the vote. However, they were defeated during the second round by an unlikely alliance between members of the RPCR and several small pro-independence factions running under the banner of "custom" and support for the traditional chiefly structure. The alliance picked up 39 percent of the vote, and 20 of the 29 seats contested.

Nevertheless, Hamu's supporters continued their campaign. Some of them targeted the provincial authorities, particularly the president of the Islands Province, whose Noumea home was attacked. In April, following his decision to extend the movement he had started in Lifou to the other islands of the Loyalty Group, Cono Hamu was expelled from the membership of *Union Calédonienne*.

On 25 December 1993, Catholics observed the one-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of the celebration of the first mass in New Caledonia. During the ceremonies, and on behalf of the entire church, Archbishop of Noumea Monsignor Calvet formally asked the forgiveness of Melanesians for "the sufferings and acts of injustice inflicted on their ancestors, who were forced to relinquish a part of their culture." This request for forgiveness was received and accepted by representatives of the eight "cultural areas" of the territory.

Generally, social tensions were more pronounced than in preceding years, particularly near the end of the year. The number of person-days lost to

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

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

FRANÇOIS SODTER

#### PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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

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

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

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

OY AU

# The Contemporary Pacific

*A Journal of Island Affairs*

*Volume 6 · Number 2*



*Fall 1994*

CENTER FOR PACIFIC ISLANDS STUDIES



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII PRESS

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII PRESS  
43302 ep1  
B