

# **The sinking of the rainbow warrior: Responses to an international act of terrorism**

**Janet Wilson**

## **Introduction: the Rainbow Warrior Affair**

The *Rainbow Warrior* affair, an act of sabotage against the flagship of the Greenpeace fleet, the *Rainbow Warrior*, when berthed at Marsden wharf in Auckland harbour on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1985, dramatised in unprecedented ways issues of neo-imperialism, national security, eco-politics and postcolonialism in New Zealand. The bombing of the yacht by French secret service agents effectively prevented its participation in a Nuclear Free Pacific campaign in which it was to have headed the Pacific Fleet Flotilla to Moruroa atoll protesting French nuclear testing. Outrage was compounded by tragedy: the vessel's Portuguese photographer, Fernando Pereira, went back on board to get his camera after the first detonation and was drowned in his cabin following the second one. The evidence of French Secret Service (Direction Generale de la Securite Exterieur or DGSE) involvement which sensationally emerged in the following months, not only enhanced New Zealand's status as a small nation and wrongful victim of French neo-colonial ambitions, it dramatically magnified Greenpeace's role as coordinator of New Zealand and Pacific resistance to French bomb-testing.

The stand-off in New Zealand –French political relations for almost a decade until French bomb testing in the Pacific ceased in 1995 notwithstanding, this act of terrorism when reviewed after almost 25 years in the context of New Zealand's strategic and political negotiations of the 1980s, offers a focus for considering the changing composition of national and regional postcolonial alliances during Cold War politics. The sinking of the *Warrior* was an important watershed in the redefining of New Zealand nationalism during this era, both in relation to French and American neo-imperialism, marked by the Lange Labour government's opposition to the ANZUS treaty, and to its Pacific rim location. It enabled an emergent Pacific nationalism to coalesce successfully with radical protest as practised by an international environmental organisation. This article examines some written and visual responses to the affair, and suggests that the *Warrior*, a symbolic gesture by Greenpeace against nuclear weapons, a vessel whose survivors were treated as "reluctant heroes", has in its afterlife acquired the status of a national symbol.<sup>1</sup>

The complex circumstances and sensational revelations of the affair triggered multiple, conflicting responses in the national and international media for over eighteen months as the French cover-up was gradually exposed. Media coverage of the outrage vastly expanded the written and visual forms of narrative, debate and protest against the bomb testing which had emerged at the time of the earliest Greenpeace activism off Moruroa atoll in 1972 and 1973.<sup>2</sup> Protest writing and art, initially aiming to arouse the

national conscience and shame the government into taking action against the French, was mainly documentary in focus consisting of autobiographical accounts, interviews and political analysis by activists. In the 1980s national concerns extended to a pro-Pacific “green” reaction to French neo-colonial ambitions; a proliferation of journalistic and documentary accounts, mainly sympathetic to the anti-nuclear cause followed the *Warrior* affair, while nuclear themes and scenarios began to appear in fiction and film. The third phase of protest during this era, provoked by the renewal of French bomb testing in 1994-95 under Chirac’s government, featured of a chorus of disparate yet united voices in diverse written and visual modes-- feature articles, poems, book-length studies, films, videos, and art -- as protest and propaganda provided a populist slant to the government’s anti-nuclear pro-environmental stance. By then a moral utopianism had emerged as a feature of New Zealand’s newly defined role in the Pacific.<sup>3</sup> This can be linked to the moral ethos of Greenpeace, and its ethical principle of “earring witness”, which the French sabotage of the *Rainbow Warrior* in 1985 indirectly enhanced.<sup>4</sup>

The written and visual protests produced during these decades demonstrate the shift in national identity identified by historian James Belich, from the more traditional nationalism and inertia towards atmospheric testing characteristic of the early 1970s, towards the “new” nationalism of the late 1980s in which the anti-nuclear policies of the Labour Governments were more widely embraced.<sup>5</sup> Hostility to an arrogant aggressor and moral disapprobation of a widely discredited practice had a unifying effect among the Pacific nations; while Maori nationalism and the sovereignty movement which emerged in the late 1970s and identified with the Polynesian heritage of the Pacific also urged a reassessment of New Zealand’s commitment to the region.<sup>6</sup> The greater independence and individualism of the new nationalism which is framed by foreign policy, notably Britain’s decision to join Europe and the crisis over ANZUS, suggests that the “politics of polarity” were active in decolonisation at a time when new, conflicting currents in society were beginning to emerge.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the upsurge of “New Zealandness” provoked by French neo-colonial ambitions in the Pacific may be seen as analogous to the growth of “Englishness” in Britain, due to conflict with its colonies during and after colonisation.

### **I. Media Responses to the *Rainbow Warrior* Affair**

The bombing and Pereira’s death provoked widespread international condemnation, while the sequence of bizarre events that unravelled subsequently kept the affair alive in the public domain, increased tensions in New Zealand-French relations, and further damaged the reputation of Mitterand’s government. Investigations by the New Zealand police soon identified French secret agents -- the Turenges (later revealed as Captain Dominique Prieur and Major Alain Mafart) -- posing as a honeymoon couple; they were apprehended at Auckland airport, their passports revealed as Swiss forgeries. The group of French secret service divers on board the yacht *Ouvea*, who laid the limpet mines that blew up the *Warrior*, escaped, scuttled their craft in the Pacific, and returned to Paris. But they too left a trail of evidence -- buying diving aquatic gear, going to restaurants, and signing into motels -- which was so obvious that the police at first thought it was a frame-up.<sup>8</sup> Finally, although the Turenges were brought to trial, their ten years’ prison sentence

(commuted from murder to manslaughter and wilful damage) was never completed; they were released to French custody on the French Polynesian island of Hao, a support base for the French nuclear testing at Moruroa; the agreement was soon breached and they were returned to Paris in October 1989.<sup>9</sup>

The French government narrowly avoided a humiliating “Watergate sur Seine” (“underwatergate”),<sup>10</sup> following an initial attempt at a whitewash in the official report produced by Admiral Tricot, a former secretary-general of the Elysee Palace, who was appointed by the Prime Minister, Laurent Fabius (the name Tricot meaning “sweater” provoked mockery in the French press, such as “Tricot washes whiter”). Heads rolled: Charles Hernu, Minister of Defence, resigned, and Admiral Pierre Lacoste, Director of the French secret services, was sacked. But it is now known that the cover-up extended to the nerve-centre of the French government. In 2005, on the twentieth anniversary of the affair, Admiral Lacoste revealed that Mitterand had personally approved of the DGSE’s plan to sink the *Warrior* and scupper Greenpeace’s plans for heading the Pacific Peace Flotilla to protest French nuclear testing at Mururora.<sup>11</sup>

From the New Zealand end, Prime Minister David Lange won support nationally and internationally for his outspoken stance. He denounced the French sabotage as “nothing more than a sordid act of international state-backed terrorism” and demanded a boycott of French goods. In the Pacific and New Zealand the incident led to increased support for the growing anti-nuclear movement. Just one month later, in August 1985, nations which belonged to the South Pacific forum-- New Zealand, Kiribati, Cook Islands, Niue, Australia, Western Samoa, Tuvalu and Fiji – signed the historic Rarotonga Treaty, the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Treaty, which banned the use of nuclear explosives, and the dumping of radio-active waste in the Pacific. The outrage undoubtedly contributed to raising the consciousness about the protest movement’s Nuclear Free Pacific campaign, including Greenpeace’s environmentalism, and it strengthened national determination to preserve the Pacific as an Ocean of Peace.

The international coverage generated by the melodramatic elements of the story continued until after the trial of the Turenges and the compensation deal reached with the French government in 1986. As controversy about the affair and general resistance to the French handling of the New Zealand enquiry continued, news-reporting became involved in the dissemination of the facts and the attempts to expose Tricot’s cover-up. At first a process of misinformation was initiated by French intelligence agencies and carried into the media by journalists with links to the DGSE. Several conspiracy theories circulated. In France it was alleged that Greenpeace was being manipulated by “communist” states, and that Pereira, who had worked for a short time for a communist paper, was a KGB agent, while a New Zealand journalist claimed that the French bombers were mercenaries, maybe working for the Foreign League.<sup>12</sup> The scandal in France following Tricot’s white-wash was such that by September 1985 the conservative newspaper *Le Monde* became involved as pressure against the government mounted and information became available due to governmental leaks from inside sources; intelligence officers from the Interior Ministry who were hostile to the secret services.<sup>13</sup> The admission of complicity that month -- Prime Minister Fabius’s public acknowledgement that the

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DGSE, acting under orders, *had* sunk the *Rainbow Warrior* and that there *had* been a cover-up -- has been attributed to the persistence of the French press, rather than to new evidence released by the New Zealand police.<sup>14</sup>

Adding to the sensationalism of the case were the absurdist antics of the French spies: the DGSE agents left a trail so Gallic, one French source said, that, “the only missing clues were a baguette, a black beret and a bottle of Beaujolais”.<sup>15</sup> The clandestine nature of the operations and public confusion about the affair led to satirical, comic accounts of French-New Zealand relations: “Alors, the great lamb chop spy swap” ran a *Daily Express* headline in the UK in September 1985 when it was thought that the New Zealand and French governments had done a deal in releasing the Turenges.<sup>16</sup> More recently the incident has been mocked as a caricature of French secret service incompetence, reminiscent of Peter Sellers as the bumbling Inspector Cloiseau in the *Pink Panther* films.<sup>17</sup> The affair cast France into the role of bully and international terrorist, while also proving the strength of *raison d’etat*;<sup>18</sup> yet its delusional aspects suggested to some commentators that the DGSE had fallen for the oldest trap in the trade, “the belief that the real world’s imperfections can be redressed by the secret world”.<sup>19</sup>

A rash of hastily compiled books, documentaries, features of the bombing and quick kill exposes of the affair appeared within a year. Michael King, in one of the earliest accounts, reported that eight books were in progress by the end of 1985.<sup>20</sup> These included solid investigative journalism with mainstream publishers and international release, such as the book by members of The Sunday Times Insight Team, *Rainbow Warrior: The French Attempt to Sink Greenpeace*; John Dyson, *Sink the Rainbow!*, and David Robie, *Eyes of Fire: The Last Voyage of the Rainbow Warrior*, to name just a few.<sup>21</sup> Later, environmentalist accounts such as *Making Waves: The Greenpeace New Zealand Story* by Michael Szabo were published, earlier French accounts of the bomb-testing such as Bengt Danielsson and Marie-Therese Danielsson’s *Poisoned Reign: French Nuclear Colonialism in the Pacific* were updated, and the affair was extensively analysed in accounts of French-New Zealand relations, French history and of the French secret service.<sup>22</sup> These are reconstructions of events based on reports, accounts, interviews, records and transcripts. Among the few literary productions of this stage are C. K. Stead’s poem, “Deconstructing the *Rainbow Warrior*”, published in the *London Review of Books* in 1986, and Keith Ovenden’s novel, *OE* (1986), described as a dark political thriller which is also an “early and well-informed attack on French policy in the Pacific”.<sup>23</sup>

## II. New Zealand anti-nuclear activism: the Peace Media of the 1970s

The unprecedented publicity which the sinking of the *Warrior* attracted cast into a new light earlier New Zealand activism against French bomb testing in the Pacific. Local traditions of protest had begun with the formation of the CND group in the 1960s, noted for the cable sent to Paris in 1964: “No bombs south of the line”.<sup>24</sup> Protestors objected to the moving of the French atmospheric programme to Moruroa in 1963 because of the danger of contamination from radioactive fallout, especially on the migratory fish on which the people of the Pacific depended for their income and lives.<sup>25</sup> At this stage, they

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mainly aimed to make the New Zealand Government take notice, to shame them into action. As Matiu Rata, Maori MP for Northland, said: “We represented small people from small countries who felt powerless in the face of events beyond the comprehension of our own government”.<sup>26</sup> Yet being small, while positioning New Zealand as David to France’s Goliath, paradoxically meant that early anti-nuclear activism in New Zealand was effective because coordinated protest could be easily facilitated. According to Michael Pugh, the peace organisation was decentralised, there was a high degree of accessibility to politicians, and networks were able to mobilise support quickly: a solid tradition of local protest developed through the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>27</sup> This expanded through grass roots Peace Movements,<sup>28</sup> as links developed between anti-nuclearism and feminism, and between anti-nuclearism and religious movements: the main churches supported the Nuclear Free Pacific Campaign, and anti-nuclearism was also a priority within Maoridom.

Yet political activism was still treated very much as a fringe activity in the years before Greenpeace New Zealand was founded in 1974. In 1971 Vancouver Greenpeace asked the New Zealand peace movements to launch a media appeal for a naval ship to sail to Moruroa on Greenpeace’s behalf. CND and the newly formed Peace Media organised a flotilla: one craft— *Greenpeace III*—was owned and skippered by David McTaggart, who with four others would weld Greenpeace into a multinational ecology group in 1977, McTaggart later becoming its International Chairman. The Peace Media protest was “an example of principled action unaffected by realpolitik”;<sup>29</sup> the protestors were associated with left wing radicalism, and they lacked any official support. The New Zealand police, Customs and Marine Departments all tried to prevent the *Vegas/Greenpeace III* from leaving.<sup>30</sup>

The adventures and mishaps of the 1972 flotilla (consisting of *Greenpeace III*, *Tamure*, *Magic Isle* and *Boy Roel*, of which only *Greenpeace III* reached the test zone at Moruroa), are narrated in *Boy Roel*, a collection of writings by members of the Peace Media. The sub-title, *Voyage to Nowhere*, reveals that the vessel never reached its destination. The book itself, printed on cheap paper by an alternative press owned by the maverick publisher, Alister Taylor, and copyrighted “Peace Research Media Project Trust”, symbolises the amateur nature of this venture, just as the contents show the embryonic nature of written protest. The founder of Peace Media, poet and lecturer in Polynesian studies, Barry Mitcalfe, in a mixture of ship’s log and personal diary recounts the lamentable journey of *Boy Roel*. The entry for Saturday 8 July 1972, one week at sea and with trouble ahead, reads:

Noon Position. Lat 72 13’S. Long 173 58’W. Day’s run 173 miles. Vessel stopped 6 hrs for repairs to lubricating system. Could not be started as batteries dead. Heavy swell and vessel rolling and pitching heavily. [ ...] About 1730 foreign fishing liner (Jap or Korean) offered us a tow, refused as engineer thought engines could be started shortly.<sup>31</sup>

*Boy Roel*, having lost power, drifted across the Pacific towards an unknown island and was from there towed to Pago Pago, just before a Search and Rescue operation was mounted. On Saturday 16th July, addressing his wife, Mitcalfe voices the doubts and uncertainties that must have appeared in these early years, as the boat's drifting suggests the futility of their endeavour:

No motor, no radio. What is happening? The world is remote. The world is an ache, a longing—for the sound of your voice, the touch of your skin. There is a sadness, a pointlessness about this, such high hopes—and now, drifting. No news. Are we a symbol of anything? Privately, we each know—of futility.<sup>32</sup>

The writings in *Boy Roel* contrast to the endeavours of the youthful, more international Greenpeace activists: protesting at sea was at that time a purely masculine venture consisting of middle aged men, volunteers who had given up their jobs, and were separated from their families.<sup>33</sup> The Peace Media's common goal of arousing the Government to act rather than the environmental utopianism which defines the Greenpeace movement, appear in contributions by Roger Boshier (an educationist, now Professor in Adult Education at the University of British Columbia), Matiu Rata (Maori MP for Northland), and Maurice Shadbolt (novelist), who all aimed to influence public opinion by targetting local groups and urging eminent personalities to take action. Shadbolt, who sailed on the craft *Tamure*, pointed out that the code of conduct between nations had been an inhibiting factor: "The truth is that, outside this code, New Zealand could have hindered the tests, perhaps even blocked them, and humbled France morally, before the world *at any time* in the past eight years".<sup>34</sup> Protesting by direct action in order to make a moral point as strongly as possible seemingly meant rejection of materialistic, bourgeois values, and the activists' attitudes reflected the long-term frustration by intellectuals with social complacency. Mitcalfe writes: "I see so much in-built inertia, conservatism and waste in our society that protest rarely succeeds".<sup>35</sup> Yet he also anticipates the moral utopianism of the 1990s in affirming the moral probity of the local protest movement, which aimed not to find a bigger role on the world stage but to make a moral point and so change the status quo: "Small people, small countries do have the power to influence events. They simply need the will".<sup>36</sup> As a *Sunday Times* editorial pointed out: "the little boat sailing into the test danger zone provided an example of resolute action that ordinary people could understand even if it didn't have any noticeable impact on Quai D'Orsay".<sup>37</sup>

Similarly the words of Norman Kirk in 1973, a year when international court action was taken against France, are a clarion call for justice at moral outrage: "We are a small nation, but we will not abjectly surrender to injustice. [...] No self-respecting nation with right on its side can meekly acquiesce to the intransigence of others. [...] We are a small nation but in the interests of justice we claim the world's attention".<sup>38</sup> The Kirk Government's initial Pacific orientation in the early 1970s has since been called by Kerry Howe a "false dawn" because it had minimal public impact and was later undermined by economic downturn.<sup>39</sup> Little was it realised then that the French attack on Greenpeace in

1985, aiming to destroy one of its cardinal symbols, would not only bring the small country onto the centre of the world stage in ways that now make Kirks' and the Peace Media's pronouncements seem prescient. It would also be another nail in the coffin of hegemonic Pakeha nationalism, already undermined by Maori activism of the late 1970s, the racially charged violence of the 1981 Springbok tour, and the Labour Government's reversal of National policy after coming to power in 1984.<sup>40</sup>

Other texts inspired by this phase of protest were Maurice Shadbolt's fictionalisation of the journey he made on the *Tamure* in his novel *Danger Zone* (1974), the first about protesting to be published in New Zealand, and McTaggart's own story in *Greenpeace III: Journey into the Bomb* (1978).<sup>41</sup> These modest productions, reflecting the ad hoc character of the protest movement and the limited, if growing status of protest through the 1970s, contrast to the large-scale reportage generated by the sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior*, and the convergence of New Zealand nationalism with the environmental protectionism in the Pacific propagated by Greenpeace.

### III. French bomb testing, Greenpeace and New Zealand's new nationalism

The *Rainbow Warrior* incident belongs to a period of US-NZ bilateral disengagement after the New Zealand Labour Party's hostility to nuclear testing in the late 1970s extended to a call for withdrawal from the ANZUS pact, which it saw as an undesirable military alliance with nuclear weapons states.<sup>42</sup> By the mid-1980s US—NZ relations began to deteriorate and the American nuclear-powered vessel USS *Cameron* was refused entry to New Zealand in February 1985. America withdrew its security commitment to New Zealand in 1986; the Labour Government's Nuclear Free Zone Bill codified the anti-nuclear policy into law: the Disarmament and Arms Control Act of 1987 meant that all nuclear-armed or nuclear-powered ships were prohibited from visiting New Zealand.

The *Rainbow Warrior* affair was pivotal in reinforcing the Labour Government's anti-nuclear policy, and in reshaping national allegiances away from the major powers, including Britain where reactions to the affair were diluted, and the USA, where support of the French sabotage was blatant, towards the Pacific. The swing in public opinion took some time to emerge because even by 1986 the degree of French involvement in the case was not fully known. But the polls in 1989 confirmed that public outrage at the terrorist act had led to widespread acceptance of Labour's anti-nuclear policy which National Prime Minister Bolger was unable to reverse despite the fact that the National Party was a long-term supporter of ANZUS and an advocate of close NZ—US ties. The moving to centre stage of peace politics at a time of profound social change caused by multiculturalism, the sense of moral betrayal over Vietnam, and the loss of homogenous or consensus politics, has been seen as an assertion of postcolonial independence, even of individualism, stemming from NIMBYISM.<sup>43</sup> The sabotage defines the moment of a "crucial shift" in national sentiment according to Belich, "when affronted new nationalism began to contest with traditionalism in the minds of the populist middle ground".<sup>44</sup> The act of terrorism on the nation's doorstep reinforced that degree of commitment to anti-nuclearism and to its Pacific location. Helen Clark, then a Labour

MP, also recognised that the colonial treaties like ANZUS and trade treaties with the EEC, “moulded by foreign policy makers”, were out of touch with the grass roots of the new generation, the multicultural pacific-oriented society that was developing, and the fact that “many Pakeha were making the psychological adjustments to becoming the Pacific people we must become”.<sup>45</sup>

The *Rainbow Warrior* affair also catalysed changes within the protest movement associated with Greenpeace that had emerged in response to French neo-colonial ambitions in French Polynesia. By the 1980s protest had outgrown its fringe radicalism of the 1960s and ‘70s, gaining middle class respectability as professional groups -- scientists, engineers, psychologists and librarians -- gave the anti-nuclear argument greater prestige and credibility. The *Warrior’s* 1985 Pacific voyage to Rongalap in the Marshallese Islands to evacuate radiation victims who had suffered from American nuclear testing in the 1950s had received heightened media attention even before the yacht was dramatically blown up: a reporter, David Robie, was travelled on the vessel as well as the photographer Ferdinand Pereira. By the mid 1980s the organisation had become *the* international face of direct action protest: the media circulated internationally Greenpeace’s sensational images of protest (such as going in on zodiac inflatables under the harpoons of whalers), while the movement’s guerrilla tactics had enraged the French military and secret services, causing (so Greenpeace claimed) the testing to be moved underground in 1973. Disapproval at such “vicarious activism”, as Greenpeace’s unconventional modes of protest by disruption came to be known, was overshadowed by the French sabotage, which McTaggart defined as a case of “a sovereign state attacking the NGO within the territory of another sovereign state”.<sup>46</sup> The bombing publicised Greenpeace’s objectives in a more favourable light than any amount of campaigning could, and the movement expanded exponentially: for example, the *Warrior’s* survivors, speaking throughout the North Island under the slogan “you can’t sink a rainbow”, managed to raise over \$200,000NZ. The outrage also confirmed the relevance of Greenpeace’s ethical, moral principle of “bearing witness”, so linking its activities further with the protest and peace movements that had developed in New Zealand and the Pacific, since the first bomb tests in 1966.<sup>47</sup>

#### **IV. Recent responses to French bomb testing, and the *Rainbow Warrior* affair**

The David and Goliath aspects of the New Zealand-France contretemps over two decades which provoked the *Rainbow Warrior* affair provided a significant framework for redefining New Zealand’s insignificant world status and geographical isolation, already under new scrutiny in the 1980s: that a minor nation stood up to a major European power, proving it to be wrong by insisting on moral right, helped discredit French neo-colonial aggression in French Polynesia. This became an important foundation for New Zealand’s new nationalism, which in the mid-80s was not only becoming more green – partly due to the shaping influence and moral dimension provided by Greenpeace -- but which linked anti-nuclearism with biculturalism and multiculturalism. The sense of loss at the vessel’s demise, combined with moral outrage at the French sabotage, displaced earlier inertia about nuclear tests or disapproval of Greenpeace for its “vicarious activism”.

Writing about and visual reconstructions of the *Rainbow Warrior* affair in the last decade, therefore, have entailed some mythologizing of the outrage, in particular by focusing on the body of the victim (the vessel itself) in discourses of remembrance and commemoration. In this respect as well Greenpeace becomes an entrenched feature of the new nationalism, even though this means some feminisation of its predominantly masculine image. The DVD, *The Women Who Launched a Rainbow* (2005), directed by Auckland artist, Claudia Pond Eyley, about five women activists working in Greenpeace New Zealand, at one level attempts to redress the gender imbalance created by the masculine, hierarchical public profile of Greenpeace by emphasising the contribution made by women.<sup>48</sup> It shows how the Auckland office of Greenpeace New Zealand was managed mainly by women, how it was infiltrated by a DGSE mole, Christine Cabon, who under the alias of Frederique Bonlieu gained access to their records, providing vital information about the movements of the Greenpeace flotilla to the DGSE.<sup>49</sup> More emotively, however, the video dwells on the local legend that developed among the Greenpeace women that the *Rainbow Warrior* had been a “good vessel” undeserving of such a fate. It had been welcomed with great aroha in New Zealand and consequently mourned (along with Ferdinand Pereira) collectively. The myth involves a powerful symbiosis between the boat (feminised as ‘she’), its peace mission and the nation-state where its life tragically ended.

The video records how the vessel’s symbolic identity as an icon of resistance was reinforced by Greenpeace International’s decision to “bury” her in such a way that she did not disappear altogether. The New Zealand Underwater Association offered to sink the wreck and make her into a living reef, an underwater memorial, and after some initial debate among local Maori about the location; it was towed to Matauri Bay in Northland on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1986, the first anniversary of the bombing.<sup>50</sup> The video shows the emotional moment of the *Rainbow Warrior* being resunk as the vessel received the protection of Ngatu Kura tribe, and so became identified with New Zealand/Polynesian biculturalism. Symbols of her existence -- the clock, the two masts, the propellor situated at the top of a steep hill overlooking the bay -- make an enduring visual memorial. This commemorative reconstruction points to the ways in which the *Rainbow Warrior* affair came to epitomise the environmental movement of the 1980s, as a moment in history when an act of state terrorism impacted on the peace movement, effectively synthesising it with newly emerging strands of nationalism.

The *Rainbow Warrior* affair became history and myth at a time of increasing multiculturalism, particularly with migration from the Pacific region. The revaluation of New Zealand’s role in the Pacific, combined with the protectionist attitude towards nuclear issues, meant that when bomb testing was resumed in 1995, a well orchestrated, widespread literary response ensued. The unanimity of the diverse voices and the range of genres— not just documentary or reportage—suggests that anti-nuclear values and the ethos of protest had been widely assimilated. But the writers were not activists, and this is no longer reportage of the experience of protesting, but rather the symbolic war against terror that writing involves. *Below the Surface: Words and Images in Protest at French Testing on Moruroa*, edited by Ambury Hall, was published in 1995 by Vintage in support of the fourteen vessels in the Moruroa Pacific Peace Flotilla. It contains work by

New Zealand poets such as Allen Curnow, C.K. Stead, Michael Harlow, Riemke Ensing, Lauris Edmond, many evoking the horrors of Hiroshima, prose pieces by novelists such as Marilyn Duckworth and Witi Ihimaera, and visual images by the artist Nigel Brown. Another is the special issue of the French journal, *Antipodes* in 1997, edited by Roger Collins and Rosemary Arnoux.<sup>51</sup> This concerted reaction points to the fact that there was popular pressure on official attempts to prevent the testing and draw the French to international retribution, possibly associated with “underdog nationalism”, because not orchestrated by any political party or local organisation.<sup>52</sup> Fantasy-based novels about nuclear disasters and nuclear fallout also appear at this stage; for example, Colin Peel’s *Atoll* (1992), about a plan to contaminate the Pacific Ocean, Gary McCormick’s satire on the secret diary of Jacques Chirac, *Honey, I blew up the Atoll* (1995) and Albert Wendt’s novel *Black Rainbow* (1992).<sup>53</sup>

### **Conclusion: Peace Politics and Utopian Moralism**

The sensational train of events in 1985 which comprised the *Rainbow Warrior* affair made possible the articulation of powerful buried elements in New Zealand society which were seeking greater outward expression and acceptance; peace politics moved on to the centre stage through the party system in ways not possible in Australia (where anti-nuclearism is less entrenched and necessitated the forming of a separate political party). New Zealand attitudes towards French nuclear colonialism converged with those of its Pacific neighbours like Fiji, Tahiti, Rarotonga, which had been waging an unequal struggle against French nuclear colonialism and looked to New Zealand for support: the injustice and outrage suffered by New Zealand during the affair reinforced these bonds. In fact the David and Goliath inequality apparent in the small nation’s overturning and exposing the political protectionism of nuclear neo-colonialism provided a new platform from which to favour if not enhance its Pacific location: for example, the images and poems in *Below the Surface* more than in any other collection, demonstrate the shift in perception, articulated by Judith Devaliant, that “New Zealand is a South Pacific nation”.<sup>54</sup> Jock Phillips has pointed out that New Zealand took on a moral role: the nation’s smallness and relative isolation meant it could not confront larger powers by force and numbers; but it could make a difference, as Barry Mitcalfe had realised in the 1970s, by making an example of certain issues. The contrast between the early days of protest in 1972, and the latter years, is not just in the overturning of national inertia, but in the development of a utopian moralism, according to political analyst Jock Phillips, the belief that the nation had a duty to “nudge the world in a peaceful direction”, partly induced, he suggests, by the aim of “improving over the English urban lifestyle, by warding off nuclear disease and keeping the South Pacific paradise pure”.<sup>55</sup>

Questions may be raised about the apparent idiosyncrasy of the collective determination to keep the Pacific nuclear free. What is New Zealand and the Pacific protecting? As one French politician said ironically about the country’s strategic importance: “New Zealand is a dagger pointing at the heart of the Antarctic”.<sup>56</sup> Yet the history of the origins, decline, and then renewal of hostility to French nuclear testing in Polynesia over these decades shows that resistance had a lasting influence on New Zealand foreign policy-making. The Kirk Government’s high profile activities of 1973-

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74, from this distance of time, signified new beginnings which are, as Kevin Clements says, “symbolically significant, if not visionary”.<sup>57</sup> From 1985 Greenpeace and its international networks which included the peace movement and groups like the Quakers, became linked to this change in national self-perception, while the large scale outrage provoked by the incident gave a more universal rationale to what might otherwise be seen as NIMBY nationalism. The drama of when the *Warrior* went down allows us to look back at protest as an emerging movement which created new vectors of solidarity and identity in New Zealand, and forward to the climate of the new millennium: the increasing globalisation both of environmental issues and the new face of terrorism.

## **Biography**

Janet Wilson is Professor of English and Postcolonial Studies at the University of Northampton, UK. A New Zealander, she has published widely on New Zealand writing and is currently working on a study of screen adaptations in New Zealand and Australian cinema. Recent publications include: *Fleur Adcock* (2007), *The Gorse Blooms Pale: the Southland Stories of Dan Davin* (2007), and a coedited volume, *Rerouting the Postcolonial: New Directions for the New Millennium* (2009). She is the editor of the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* and currently chair of EACLALS.

## **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Michael King, *Death of the Rainbow Warrior*, Auckland: Penguin, 1988, 240.

<sup>2</sup> Michelle Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing: The Postcolonial Literatures of Aotearoa/New Zealand and Oceania*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, 92-93, points out that Maori poet Hone Tuwhare’s acclaimed poem about nuclear fallout, ‘No Ordinary Sun’ (1958), may have been inspired by US bombing of the Marshall Islands in 1954.

<sup>3</sup> The term comes from Jock Phillips, ‘New Zealand and the ANZUS Alliance: Changing National Self-Perceptions 1945-88’, *Australia, New Zealand and the US: Internal Change and Alliance Relations in the ANZUS States*, ed. Richard W. Baker, New York: Greenwood Publishing, 1991, 185-87.

<sup>4</sup> The Quaker logic of bearing passive witness by placing oneself at the scene of an environmental or social horror was interpreted by Greenpeace as risk-taking in order to affirm a high moral principle. See David McTaggart with Helen Slinger, *Shadow Warrior: An Autobiography of Greenpeace’s International Founder, David McTaggart* (Orion 2002); 224.

<sup>5</sup> James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000*, Auckland: Allen Lane and Penguin Press, 2001, 439.

<sup>6</sup> An example is the speech made by Witi Ihimaera in 1985: ‘New Zealand as a Pacific Nation (or “The Hitchhikers Guide to the Pacific”)’. In *New Directions in New Zealand Foreign Policy*, ed. Hyam Gold (Takapuna: Bento Ross, 1985): 127-40 (128); cited by Tom Ryan, ‘On Becoming a Pacific Nation: Polyphonic Reflections’, *CNZS Bulletin of New Zealand Studies*, ed. Ian Conrich and Gerri Kimber, 1 (2008): 115-141 (126).

<sup>7</sup> The term comes from Homi Bhabha whose celebrated ‘third space of enunciation’, that ambivalent space between cultural traditions and politics which opens the way to the ‘inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity’, is a refusal of ‘the politics of polarity’; see *The Politics of Location*, London: Routledge, 1994, 36-9 (38).

<sup>8</sup> Cited in Belich, *Paradise Reforged*: 439; see also King, *Death of the Rainbow Warrior*: 63-92; John Dyson (with Joseph Fitchett), *Sink the Rainbow! An Enquiry into the “Greenpeace Affair”*, London: Gollancz, 1986, 95.

<sup>9</sup> David Lange, *My Life*, Auckland: Viking, 2005, 222-3, 274-5, says the French threatened economic sanctions, and once the couple had returned to France, despite an arbitration tribunal in New York,

international law hardly applied; the New Zealand government was awarded ‘monetary compensation which we did not seek’.

<sup>10</sup> Dyson, *Sink the Rainbow!*: 174.

<sup>11</sup> See the *Associated Press* report of Sunday 10 July 2005; ‘Common Dreams News Centre’.

[www.commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org). Accessed. 16 June 2006

<sup>12</sup> King, *Death of the Rainbow Warrior*: 196-97.

<sup>13</sup> Dyson, *Sink the Rainbow!*: 178, on the red herring, the possibility of a third team.

<sup>14</sup> King, *Death of the Rainbow Warrior*: 200-02.

<sup>15</sup> Cited in Belich, *Paradise Reforged*: 439.

<sup>16</sup> Dyson, *Sink the Rainbow!*: 90.

<sup>17</sup> Belich, *Paradise Reforged*: 439-40.

<sup>18</sup> Dyson *Sink the Rainbow!*: 185. The term means that the state has the right to resort to any measure to protect its interests.

<sup>19</sup> Douglas Porch, *The French Secret Services from the Dreyfus Affair to the Gulf War*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997, 456 (citing John le Carre).

<sup>20</sup> Michael Szabo, *Making Waves: The Greenpeace New Zealand Story*, Auckland: Reed, 1991, 133.

<sup>21</sup> Robin Morgan et al. The Sunday Times Insight Team, *Rainbow Warrior: The French Attempt to Sink Greenpeace*, London: Century Hutchinson, 1986.; David Robie, *Eyes of Fire: The Last Voyage of the Rainbow Warrior*, Lindon Publishing, Auckland, 1986.; Richard Shears and Isobelle Gidley, *The Rainbow Warrior Affair*, Unwin Paperbacks: Sydney, 1985.; Jane Dibblin, *Day of Two Suns: US Nuclear Testing and the Pacific Islands*, London: Virago, 1988.

<sup>22</sup> Douglas Porch, *The French Secret Services From the Dreyfus Affair to the Gulf War*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997.; Bengt and Marie Therese Danielsson, *Poisoned Reign: French Nuclear Colonialism in the Pacific*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. rev., London: Penguin, 1986.; a revision of *Moruroa Mon Amour, the French Nuclear Tests in the Pacific*, London: Penguin, 1977.

<sup>23</sup> See *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, ed. Roger Robinson and Nelson Wattie, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998, 421; Stead’s poem was republished in Ambury Hall’s edited collection, *Below the Surface: Words and images in Protest at French Testing on Moruroa*, Auckland, Vintage, 1995, 116-7; for anti-nuclear poetry anthologies produced in the Pacific see Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing*, 95, 97.

<sup>24</sup> Szabo, *Making Waves*, 10.

<sup>25</sup> David Lange, *Nuclear Free: The New Zealand Way*, Auckland: Penguin, 1990, 118-19; Kevin Clements, *Back from the Brink: The Creation of a Nuclear-Free New Zealand*, Allen and Unwin: Port Nicholson Press, 1988, 50-57.

<sup>26</sup> Barry Mitcalfe et al. *Boy Roel: Voyage to Nowhere*, Wellington: Alister Taylor Publishing Ltd, 130.

<sup>27</sup> Michal Pugh, *The ANZUS Crisis: Nuclear Visiting and Deterrence*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989, 108-12.

<sup>28</sup> Foundation for Peace Studies New Zealand/Aotearoa was founded in 1975; the Peace Movement New Zealand was renamed as Peace Movement Aotearoa in 1988; there was also the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom/Peace Action Dunedin. See [www.converge.org.nz](http://www.converge.org.nz); [www.peace.net.nz](http://www.peace.net.nz).

<sup>29</sup> Clements, *Back From the Brink*: 64-66.

<sup>30</sup> Szabo, *Making Waves*: 7.

<sup>31</sup> Barry Mitcalfe et al. *Boy Roel: Voyage to Nowhere*, Wellington: Alister Taylor Publishing Ltd, 26.

<sup>32</sup> *Boy Roel*: 40.

<sup>33</sup> *Boy Roel*: 44. The crew of *Boy Roel* lost altogether \$6,500 in salaries and wages.

<sup>34</sup> *Boy Roel*: 115.

<sup>35</sup> *Boy Roel*: 25.

<sup>36</sup> *Boy Roel*: 52.

<sup>37</sup> Cited in Clements, *Back from the Brink*: 66.

<sup>38</sup> Cited in Clements, *Back from the Brink*: 79-80; on the events of 1973 see Pugh, *The ANZUS Crisis*: 104.

<sup>39</sup> Kerry Howe, ‘New Zealand’s Twentieth Century Pacifics’, *New Zealand Journal of History* 34.1 (April 2000): 4-19; cited by Ryan in ‘Becoming a Pacific Nation’: 133.

<sup>40</sup> Mark Williams, 'Crippled by Geography? New Zealand Nationalisms', *Not on Any Map: Essays on Postcoloniality and Cultural Nationalism*, ed. Stuart Murray, Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1997, 19-37; cited by Ryan, 'On Becoming a Pacific Nation': 121-22.

<sup>41</sup> Maurice Shadbolt, *Danger Zone*, Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974, David McTaggart with Robert Hunter, *Greenpeace III: Journey into the Bomb*, London: Collins, 1978.

<sup>42</sup> See Lange, *Nuclear-Free: The New Zealand Way*: 96, 135.

<sup>43</sup> Pugh, *The ANZUS Crisis*: 100.

<sup>44</sup> James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000*, Auckland: Allen Lane and Penguin Press, 2001, 439.

<sup>45</sup> 'Reviewing New Zealand's Defence and Security Policies During IYP', *Peacelink* 38 (March 1986): 6; cited in Pugh, *The ANZUS Crisis*: 107.

<sup>46</sup> David McTaggart with Helen Slinger, *Shadow Warrior: An Autobiography of Greenpeace International Founder*, London: Orion, 2002, 189.

<sup>47</sup> See Mario Diani and Paolo R. Donati, 'Organisational Change in Western European Environmental Groups: A Framework for Analysis', *Environmental Politics* 8.1 (1999): 24. They state that vicarious activism generates media attention and therefore financial resources from the general public but does not mobilise sympathisers.

<sup>48</sup> On Christine Cabon see King, *Death of the Rainbow Warrior*: 49-60.

<sup>49</sup> 2005 was the twentieth anniversary of the bombing. Five survivors appear: Hilari Anderson and Susi Newborn, founding Greenpeace crew members in the UK in 1977; Bunny McDiarmid, and Hanne Sorensen, crew-members; Margaret Mills, shipboard cook from Waiheke. Pond Eyley has since made a TV documentary sequel, *Departure and Return*. See "Pacific Media Watch" <<http://www.pmw.c2o.org/2006/reg4888.html>> accessed 17<sup>th</sup> October 2009. Other visual productions include the 1989 Australian TV mini-series, *The Rainbow Warrior Conspiracy*, dir. Chris Thomson, the NZ/US co-production, *The Rainbow Warrior*, dir. Michael Tudner (1992), and the French TV movie, *L'Affaire du Rainbow Warrior*, dir Pierre Boutron (2006)

<sup>50</sup> King, *Death of the Rainbow Warrior*: 241-52.

<sup>51</sup> *A New Zealand Contribution to the Tahitian Myth—New Zealand's Responses to the Last Nuclear Tests. Antipodes* 3 (1997). The Cultural Studies Research Centre, University of Otago. For responses to nuclear testing in the Pacific by Pacific writers, Dewe Gorode and Chantal Spitz in the 1990s, see Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing*: 97 98-99, 134, 135-36.

<sup>52</sup> See Peter Low, 'New Zealand's Responses to the last French Nuclear tests', *Antipodes* 3 (1997): 76. He says (75) that public opinion found a 98% opposition.

<sup>53</sup> See s.v. 'Pacific' in *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*: 425-26.

<sup>54</sup> Judith Devaliant, 'A Personal View'. In *Below the Surface*: 26.

<sup>55</sup> 'New Zealand and the ANZUS Alliance: Changing National Self-Perceptions, 1945-88': 185-7.

<sup>56</sup> Dyson, *Sink the Rainbow!*: 89.

<sup>57</sup> *Back from the Brink*: 83.