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Antinuclear Campaigning and the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone (Rarotonga) Treaty, 1960-85

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Previous histories of the disarmament movement have given relatively little attention to the sustained role that Australian, New Zealand and Pacific Island anti-nuclear movements played over three decades from 1960 to 1985 in initially proposing the establishment of a Pacific and wider Southern Hemisphere nuclear free zone, lobbying their respective Labor Parties and Labor Governments for changes in party policy, and eventually prompting regional governments to commence the SPNWFZ treaty negotiations that led to the signing of the 1985 Rarotonga Treaty. At the time this was only the second regional NWFZ to be established anywhere in the world. It continues to ban land-based nuclear weapon stationing by any nuclear power and constrains any Australian moves to acquire nuclear weapons. The paper draws on available primary and secondary documentary sources to identify the specific ways in which Australian, New Zealand and Pacific Island antinuclear movements influenced (and in some aspects failed to influence) government policy on regional denuclearization. The paper concludes that while the treaty as finally negotiated contained many weaknesses from the viewpoint of complete nuclear disengagement, particularly in its failure to prevent nuclear ship visits, missile testing, nuclear-weapon-related electronic bases, and reliance on extended nuclear deterrence on the part of Australia, it has achieved some partial advances in legally constraining potential Australian moves to acquire nuclear weapon, reassurance to regional neighbours, prevention of stationing of nuclear weapons by external nuclear weapon states, and encouragement of regional states to participate in a global network of nuclear free zone member states that is acting as an international lobby group to work for the global elimination of nuclear weapons.

Regional nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ) treaties are important strings to the disarmament and non-proliferation bow. They serve to complement the 1968 Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and add impetus to more far-reaching efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons globally. Six such zones are now in force across the globe, covering almost all of the Southern Hemisphere and some parts of the Northern Hemisphere: Australia and the South Pacific (1985 Rarotonga Treaty), Latin America (1967 Tlatelolco Treaty), Antarctica (1959), Southeast Asia (1995 Bangkok Treaty), Africa (1996 Pelindaba Treaty), and Central Asia (2006 Semipalatinsk Treaty).¹ 112 out of 194 current UN member states are currently signatories to zones in their region. While NWFZs differ from region to region in their degree of rigour, all aim to prevent regional states from acquiring their own nuclear weapons and to prevent nuclear weapon states (NWS) from stationing nuclear weapons in the zone. They also seek to secure legally binding assurances from the five NPT-recognized nuclear weapon states (US, UK, France, Russia and China) that they will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against NWFZ zone states.²

This paper examines the role and contribution of antinuclear and civil society efforts to establish a regional nuclear free zone in the period up to the signing of the 1985 South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (SPNWFZ) Rarotonga Treaty, negotiated under the auspices of the South Pacific Forum (now Pacific Islands Forum), the regional organization of independent South Pacific

island states, Australia and New Zealand.³ In the case of the 1985 Rarotonga Treaty, the antinuclear campaigns that led up to and contributed to the negotiation of the treaty began some 25 years earlier and may be divided into three broad waves.

The first wave of pressure from 1960 to 1964 was focused on efforts within both Australia and New Zealand to establish a Southern Hemisphere NWFZ. This was overshadowed from 1965 to 1972 by the advent of the Vietnam War and peace movement concentration on ending that war. The second wave of pressure was from 1973 to 1975 and focused more specifically on establishing a regional South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone in the context of continued French nuclear testing in the region. During this period, the main involvement was on the part of anti-testing movements, the New Zealand Labour Party, and the New Zealand, Fijian and Papua New Guinea Governments. The third and ultimately successful wave of pressure was from 1975 to 1985, involving campaigning at the regional level by the transnational Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement, together with national antinuclear campaigns in Fiji, Australia and New Zealand, leading to active support and action from South Pacific Forum member governments, especially from Labour Governments in Australia and New Zealand during 1984-85.

First Wave: the Southern Hemisphere NFZ Initiative, 1960-64

The first wave of regional interest and proposals in a nuclear free zone emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s in the context of increasing international concern and protest over nuclear weapons testing, the risks of radioactive fallout, and the threat posed by nuclear weapons in the context of Cold War tensions.⁴ Concern over nuclear threats was particularly heightened during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis when the world came close to the brink of nuclear war.

Australia and Pacific islands were important sites for nuclear testing and potential proliferation in the central Pacific where the US began testing nuclear weapons in the Marshall Islands from 1946 onwards, and in Australia where Britain began testing from 1952, later moving to Christmas Island in Kiribati (formerly the British administered Gilbert and Ellis Islands). Despite reassurances from the Menzies Government, public concern began to emerge about radioactive fallout from the British tests, especially after Britain moved its test program to Maralinga in South Australia.

Not only was Australia host to British nuclear testing, but the Menzies Government was negotiating with the United States about the establishment of the 1963 Northwest Cape communication facility for US nuclear-armed submarines. There is also now evidence that the Menzies Government was actively considering nuclear weapon acquisition in the mid 1950s to early 1960s, including holding discussions with the UK on possible transfer of tactical nuclear weapons.⁵ However, after a March 1957 agreement between President Eisenhower and Prime Minister Macmillan on the special UK-US relationship, Australia was excluded from nuclear sharing arrangements

It was in this context that the first proposal for a regional nuclear free zone was advanced in the Australian Parliament on 15 May 1962 by the leader of the Opposition, Arthur Calwell.⁶ Calwell proposed that the 1959 Antarctic Treaty nuclear-free-zone be extended to include the whole Southern Hemisphere, and called for the convening of a conference of both Antarctic treaty members and other countries to discuss the possibility of establishing such a wider NWFZ. Menzies dismissed the proposal on the grounds that Australia should not "permanently contract herself out of permitting nuclear weapons to be used in war or defence...on her soil" and asked, "Have we reached the very ecstasy of suicide in Australia?"⁷ Menzies' response reflected the Cold War zero-sum thinking of the time in the context of the prevailing Western containment policy towards communism, and Australian fears of Communist China and concern about communist influence in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Within the Labor Party, the Southern Hemisphere NWFZ was originally advanced and endorsed at the 5 May 1962 Federal Executive meeting, and reaffirmed at its 5 July 1962 meeting.⁸ The Labor nuclear-free-zone policy did not appear in a vacuum. It emerged and was proposed by the Labor Party leadership in the context of an upsurge in the antinuclear and disarmament movements both internationally and within Australia as fears spread about the radioactive consequences of nuclear testing and the threat to humanity posed by nuclear weapons. Established peace and disarmament organisations, such as the Melbourne-based Congress for International Cooperation and Disarmament (CICD) (and the Sydney-based Association for International Cooperation and Disarmament established (AICD) were joined in the early 1960s by newer groups inspired by the example and success of the British CND and Committee of 100. They included Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament groups in Melbourne (1960), Sydney (1962), Brisbane (1962) and Perth (1962).⁹ There were parallel developments in New Zealand where, during 1959-1960 various nuclear disarmament groups across the country formed a national New Zealand CND with over 1,700 members.¹⁰

Both in Australia and New Zealand, the various groups were active in lobbying Opposition Labor Parties and organizing Aldermaston-style radial marches from outer suburbs to central city areas to symbolize the radius of destruction from a nuclear bomb. More specifically, disarmament advocates in both Australia and New Zealand strongly supported Labour leaders on the need to pursue a Southern Hemisphere Nuclear Free Zone.

A key campaigning tool was the organization of national peace petitions. 1962 and 1963 petitions, initiated by the NSW Peace Committee, focused on support for Calwell's May 1962 proposal to extend the Antarctic nuclear-free-zone to cover the whole Southern Hemisphere. The 1962 petition was particularly widely supported across Australia, with over 200,000 signatures.¹¹ At Calwell's 1963 election policy speech, CND supporters provided "one of the loudest burst of applause" for the part of his speech on the nuclear free zone".¹²

Across the Tasman, the New Zealand CND and other civil society disarmament activists were successful in encouraging the New Zealand Labour Party to adopt the CND Southern Hemisphere NWFZ proposal as policy in 1964. CND antinuclear advocate, Dr Ron Locker, presented a petition with 80,238 signatures to Parliament in 1963 calling for the Southern Hemisphere to be nuclear-weapon-free zone.¹³ Clements notes that "The idea of a nuclear weapons-free zone appeared a good year before it became Labour Party policy".¹⁴ In both Australia and New Zealand, the antinuclear movements in this period placed great emphasis not only on petitions and marches but also on seeking to have the opposition Labo(u)r parties in both countries adopt nuclear free zone policies that might be pursued were the parties to come to power, as indeed happened in 1972.

Second Wave: The UN SPNFZ Resolution, 1965-1975

While the focus of the peace movements in both Australia and New Zealand during the late 1950s and early to mid 1960s was primarily on nuclear disarmament and testing, the advent of conscription at the end of 1964 and the first Australian troops dispatched to the Vietnam War in April 1965 led to the peace movement refocusing its aims and energies on stopping the Vietnam war and ending conscription. Both in Melbourne and Sydney, the newer nuclear disarmament CND groups transformed themselves into anti-Vietnam war committees.¹⁵

Despite the understandable concentration of the Australian peace and anti-war movement on a war that was directly involving Australian troops and conscripts, there was also an awareness on the part of antinuclear movements across the South Pacific that nuclear activities and potential threats in the Pacific region were far from diminishing, indeed were increasing in the form of nuclear testing, missile testing, nuclear basing arrangements, nuclear-armed ship visits occurring widely in both the South and North Pacific regions, and the mining of uranium in

Australia.¹⁶ The most serious of potential new nuclear threats as perceived regionally was the decision of France to commence nuclear testing in the Pacific. In January 1963, the French President, Charles de Gaulle, announced the establishment of a nuclear testing base at Moruroa and Fangataufa in Polynesia.¹⁷ Between 1966 and 1974, France was to conduct 46 atmospheric tests at the base, including an H-bomb test in 1968.¹⁸

Elsewhere in the Pacific, the US was continuing its missile testing at Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands, and undertaking nuclear ship visits to many ports in the Pacific while refusing to confirm the presence of nuclear weapons under its "non-confirm, non-deny" policy. Within Australia and New Zealand, the US also established electronic communication, command, control, and intelligence (C3I) bases with potential or actual roles in relation to US nuclear armed forces, including submarines. In Australia, it established the Northwest Cape base in Western Australia in 1963 with bipartisan support from the Government and the Opposition Labor Party, although the latter was greatly divided on the base agreement, with left leaders of the party strongly opposing it. Further US C3I installations followed at Pine Gap and Nurrungar.¹⁹

During this 1965-1976 period, antinuclear movements across the Pacific began to spring up and actively campaign on nuclear related issues, particularly after French nuclear testing at Moruroa began in 1966, with consequent radioactive fallout across the whole Southern Pacific.

In New Zealand, David Lange recalled that "public concern about (French testing's) harmful effect was widespread" and that after coming to office in 1972, the Kirk Labour Government responded to public concern by sending two frigates into the test zone in July 1973, and worked together with the Australian Whitlam Labor Government in mounting a case against French testing in the International Court of Justice.²⁰ The Court voted eight to six on 23 June 1973 to call on France to end the testing.²¹ This was partially successful in that France decided to end its atmospheric test program in 1974, but France continued with underground testing at Moruroa and Fangataufa, and went on to conduct a further 147 tests between 1975 and 1996.²²

Peace and independence movements in other parts of the South Pacific were also beginning to mobilize strongly against nuclear threats, particularly French nuclear testing. As early as 1970, a Fijian anti-nuclear movement had emerged in the form of ATOM (Against Tests on Moruroa), established by concerned members of the Pacific Theological College, University of the South Pacific, Student Christian Movement, YWCA, Fiji Council of Churches, and University of the South Pacific Students Association.²³ The group researched and publicized the likely effects of the French tests, and met with the Fijian Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, to pursue their concerns.²⁴ Significantly, one of the first acts of the new South Pacific Forum regional organization was its 1971 call for an end to French nuclear testing in the Pacific.²⁵ In Polynesia itself, there was widespread opposition to the French testing program both within the territorial assembly and on the part of anti-nuclear and independence activists. Continued protest over the impacts of the tests intensified in 1973 with international antinuclear groups, such as Greenpeace, staging sail-ins that attracted world wide attention to the tests.²⁶

It was in this wider regional context of concern and protest over both nuclear testing and wider nuclear activities in the region that the 1972-75 Kirk (later Rowlings) New Zealand Government began initiating a new regional diplomatic campaign to establish a South Pacific nuclear weapon free zone. This campaign not only reflected the immediate regional concerns over French nuclear testing and domestic New Zealand concerns over US military installations in New Zealand, but also served to deliver on the Kirk Government's commitment in its 1972 Labour Party Election Manifesto to call for the convening of a regional Pacific conference to establish a nuclear weapon and test-free zone along the lines of the Antarctic Treaty. This 1972 election promise was a direct policy continuation of the earlier Southern Hemisphere NWFZ policy that was originally advanced in the Party's 1963 Conference Report and Election Manifesto, and reaffirmed with minor modifications in the Party's 1966 Conference Report and 1969 Election

Manifesto, all of which may be considered a response to the energetic lobbying and petitioning of the New Zealand antinuclear movement.²⁷

The Kirk Labour Government's 1975 nuclear-free-zone proposal called for a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone extending from 60 degrees South (the Antarctic Treaty boundary) to the Equator, with the eastern and western boundaries to be negotiated.²⁸ The Kirk Government's pursuit of the treaty even after the cessation of French atmospheric testing in 1974 reflected wider concerns about intrusion of superpower rivalry into the South Pacific and continuing nuclear-related activities in the region, including US military installations in New Zealand.

The first step of the New Zealand Kirk Government was to take the proposal to the mid-1974 ANZUS Council Meeting with Australia and the US, but immediately met with opposition from the US Secretary of State, who refused to let it be included in the ANZUS final communiqué.²⁹ Undeterred, the Kirk Government took the SPNFZ proposal to the July 1975 South Pacific Forum, where it was supported by all the Forum island states and Australia (still under the Whitlam Labor Government). The Forum "emphasised the importance of keeping the region free from the risk of nuclear contamination and involvement in a nuclear conflict" and "commended the idea of establishing an nuclear weapons free zone in the South Pacific as a means of achieving that aim".³⁰ Despite continued US opposition, New Zealand Kirk Government, joined by Fiji and Papua New Guinea, continued its efforts to secure support for the zone by taking the proposal to the UN General Assembly. The joint UN General Assembly resolution on 11 December 1975 endorsed establishment of a South Pacific nuclear-free-zone and enjoined all the countries concerned to carry forward consultations about ways and means of implementing the proposal. The motion was carried 110 votes to 0, with 20 abstentions (abstainers include four nuclear weapon states, US, USSR, UK and France).³¹

With the advent of the Fraser Liberal-County Party Coalition Government in Australia and the Muldoon National Party Government in New Zealand in late 1975, the consultations called for in the UN resolution on the SPNFZ were not pursued. As David Lange noted, "The [New Zealand] National Government, knowing America's wishes, had buried the zone. That to me was a denial of the right of the people of the South Pacific to decide their own destiny."³²

While overshadowed by campaigns to end the Vietnam war, this second wave of antinuclear movement efforts to secure a SPNFZ did involve some important advances in successfully securing Labo(u)r opposition parties' support for a SPNFZ, the subsequent active support and advocacy of the New Zealand, Fiji and PNG governments, and finally international backing for the idea at the UN on the part of the great majority of UN member states.

Third Wave: the Nuclear-Free Pacific Campaign and Rarotonga Treaty, 1975-1985

The reluctance to pursue the 1975 SPNFZ proposal on the part of the incoming conservative Australian and New Zealand governments in late 1975 delayed but did not ultimately prevent progress towards implementing the initiative. Anti-nuclear movements across the Pacific region and within Australia and New Zealand continued to press for the zone, finally succeeding in galvanizing the governments of the region to begin negotiating the SPNFZ during 1984-85. These region-wide pressures were prompted by both heightened international awareness of global nuclear threats and regional concerns over continued nuclear activities and threats in the Pacific.

Internationally, there was a reinvigoration of UK and European anti-nuclear movements in the late 1970s and early 1980s focussing on Cold War nuclear threats, particularly that posed by intermediate range nuclear-armed missiles stationed in Europe. Within the Pacific Region, there was a corresponding upsurge in antinuclear movement movements during the late 1970s and early 1980s that was not only concerned about global nuclear threats manifest in Europe but also about specific nuclear entanglements and threats occurring in the Pacific region. These included: the continued French nuclear testing program at Moruroa and Fangataufa; US nuclear-weapon-

related C3I bases in Australia and New Zealand; US nuclear-armed ship visits to ports in the region; US missile testing in the Pacific; uranium mining in Australia; and the nuclear war implications of the ANZUS Alliance.

One of the most important of the 1975 initiatives relating to the SPNFZ Rarotonga Treaty was the first transnational regional civil society conference to pursue the goal of a regional nuclear free and independent Pacific. The conference, held in Suva from 1-6 April 1975, was initiated by the Fijian antinuclear group, ATOM, and brought together 88 delegates from antinuclear and independence groups across the Pacific, including CND New Zealand, Campaign Against Foreign Military Activities in New Zealand (CAFMANZ), South Pacific Action Network (SPAN), Congress for International Cooperation and Disarmament (CICD) Australia, Les Francais Contre Le Bombe (French) and the Student Christian Movements of Fiji, Australia and New Zealand.³³

A key outcome of the conference was the drafting of a "People's Treaty for a Nuclear-Free Pacific Zone" which embodied regional anger and opposition to nuclear intrusions and exploitation of the region and advanced a set of denuclearization and decolonization goals for a newly constituted movement, the Nuclear Free Pacific and Independence (NFIP). Renamed the "People's Charter for a Nuclear-Free and Independent Pacific" at successive NFIP regional conferences, the Charter became a unifying manifesto around which grassroots antinuclear and independence movements cooperated in pressing for a comprehensive nuclear free zone and the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights throughout the Pacific region.

The effectiveness of the new NFIP movement rapidly became a source of concern to US diplomats at the time. The former US Ambassador to Fiji, William Boddie Jr., for example, stated in early 1962, "the US must do everything possible to counter this movement. We must convince our friends in the region that a 'nuclear-free Pacific' could change the balance of power with the Soviets to our disadvantage and thereby endanger world peace".³⁴

Despite the resistance of the Australia and New Zealand conservative governments in power from 1975 to 1983 (1984 in New Zealand), the Melanesian island states, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, continued to actively pursue the regional South Pacific NWFZ as reflected in PNG foreign policy statements, and speeches and statements from other South Pacific leaders. Within Fiji, however, the Government's opposition to nuclear activities was moderated in 1983 when the Prime Minister, Sir Kamisese Mara, reversed his previous opposition to nuclear ship visits, possibly as a result of pressures from the United States. Concerned about this shift in Fijian Government policy, anti-nuclear activists, academics, church leaders and trade unionists formed a new antinuclear group in September 1983, the Fiji Anti-Nuclear Group (FANG) with the aims of lobbying at national, regional and international levels against "activities that contribute to nuclearization of the Pacific" and encouraging "public participation in the discussions surrounding the proposed NFZ Treaty" (the latter relating to Australian Hawke Government's revival of the SPNFZ treaty proposal at the 1983 South Pacific Forum).³⁵

Within New Zealand and Australia antinuclear movements during the late 1970s and early 1980s were beginning to mobilize the same level of public support and mass participation as the anti-Vietnam war movement in the early 1970s. In New Zealand, the antinuclear peace movement focused particularly on nuclear ship visits. The Auckland antinuclear activist, George Armstrong, founded the Auckland Peace Squadron in October 1975 as "a creative, affirmative, non-violent action...that could make New Zealand an island of sanity in an ocean of peace".³⁶ Its aim was to blockade Auckland and other ports against nuclear ship visits, and did this very dramatically when the US cruiser Long Beach visited in October 1976 with a highly publicized armada of small boats, dinghies and surf board riders which obstructed and delayed the passage of the cruiser. By 1979, the Peace Squadron had been joined by a wide range of New Zealand and international anti-nuclear groups including Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, CND, and the New Zealand Foundation of Peace Studies, and, from 1980, a coordinating body, Peace Movement

Aotearoa.³⁷ In 1981 the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee was initiated by Larry Ross to promote local nuclear-free-zones across New Zealand, and by 1984 had been successful in having 94 local nuclear-weapon-free zones proclaimed by city, county and borough councils (pp.114-16).³⁸ During 1980-1982, the antinuclear movement was able to secure a greater commitment to the nuclear free zone proposal from the New Zealand Labour Party at its 1982 Labour Party Conference, just two years before it returned to power at the 1984 election. As Kevin Clements notes:

At the 1982 Labour Party Conference there was a call both for the active promotion of a nuclear weapons-free zone in the South Pacific and resolutions for the withdrawal of New Zealand from ANZUS. (The Nuclear Free Zone Committee and other groups had lobbied party delegates effectively.)...This meant that from 1982 onwards the aspirations of the Labour Party and the peace movement were virtually identical. This provided an important source of electoral strength to the Labour Party in its build-up to the 1984 election campaign.³⁹

In early 1983 David Lange assumed the leadership of the New Zealand Labour Party, and was concerned to respond sympathetically to the nuclear-free groundswell both within and beyond the Labour Party. Lange had already been greatly influenced by the antinuclear movement in the 1970s and early 1980s. While still Opposition Leader in 1983, Lange was quick to voice support for the Australian Government's revival of the South Pacific NWFZ proposal at the August 1983 South Pacific Forum meeting, suggesting that "we will be able to work with our Pacific neighbours to achieve a South Pacific nuclear weapon free zone" and arguing that, while the Australian proposal did not go far enough, it would still be a valuable "first step".⁴⁰ A key initiative on the part of the Labour Opposition and the anti-nuclear movement in mid-1984 was a private member's bill put by Richard Pebble.⁴¹ The bill sought to ban nuclear ship visits, prohibit the building of nuclear reactors and nuclear waste dumping, and give legal recognition to the 1975 UN General Assembly resolution on the SPNFZ.

When the Labour Party came to power on 26 July 1984, David Lange, now Prime Minister, rapidly moved to put into place the Labour Party's nuclear-free New Zealand principles, declining to accept nuclear-armed warships, a move that immediately resulted in conflict with the US and with elements of the New Zealand military, particularly in relation to how the new policy affected the ANZUS alliance. Lange, however, was not to be convinced by the US and ANZUS ally Australian arguments about the need for extended nuclear deterrence to protect New Zealand:

As far as I was concerned, deterrence in the South Pacific was more than dangerous, it was absurd. Nobody could for a moment imagine that the United States would risk its people, and the world's, by defending its small and distant ally with nuclear weapons. No invader, if there ever was one, would be held back for a moment by such an unlikely possibility.⁴²

The Lange Government explicitly renounced reliance on a nuclear defence for New Zealand, even if that posed strains on its ANZUS alliance with the United States. Following New Zealand rejection of a proposed visit by the *USS Buchanan* in February 1985, the Reagan Administration suspended ANZUS links and security guarantees to New Zealand from August 1986.

The Lange Government followed up its denuclearization initiatives within New Zealand by offering rapid support to the Australian Hawke Government's raising of the SPNFZ proposal the South Pacific Forum. The August 1984 South Pacific Forum meeting took place just one month after the Lange Government came to power, and New Zealand moved to give rapid and

full support to the Australian proposal. Lange has noted that he went to the 1984 South Pacific Forum "to resurrect the idea of a South Pacific nuclear-free-zone".⁴³ From David Lange's point of view, the SPNFZ Treaty as signed at Rarotonga a year later, fell very short of the nuclear disengagement approaches that New Zealand had embarked on within its own territory, but did, however, represent the first rung on a ladder towards more comprehensive regional denuclearization.

During this third 1975-1985 period of regional campaigning to secure a SPNFZ, the antinuclear movement pressures for such a zone were equally strong in Australia. During the early 1980s, the wider Australian antinuclear movement was coordinated through coalition groupings, such as People for Nuclear Disarmament (PND) organizations at the state level and the Australian Coalition for Disarmament and Peace at the national level. PND was initially established in Melbourne in October 1981 and rapidly attracted 50 affiliated groups and organizations, including professional groups, unions, environmental, student, church and women's groups.⁴⁴

The Australian antinuclear movement at this time focused on a range of goals, such as global abolition of nuclear weapons, ending uranium mining, and dismantling US nuclear-weapon-related bases in Australia, but also included a call for the creation of a nuclear-free Pacific region. Besides the major Palm Sunday rallies, a major strategy on the part of PND was the Disarmament Declaration Campaign which presented a declaration to the Australian Government in October 1984 that was signed by 250,000 individuals. The Declaration demanded "the removal of American nuclear-related bases from our soil, an end to visits to Australia of any nuclear armed ships or planes, an end to uranium mining, and the creation of a nuclear-free zone in the Pacific region".⁴⁵

A particular development that concentrated the minds of some politicians in the major parties was the success of the newly established Nuclear Disarmament Party which contested the 1984 federal elections, winning 9.7% of the Senate vote in NSW and 6.9% of the vote in Victoria, and the election of a senator (Jo Vallentine) in Western Australia.

In August 1963, the new Hawke Labor Government took several steps to respond to the upsurge in Australian, regional and international calls for action on nuclear issues and threats. One was to respond to the calls for a regional nuclear free zone by officially proposing a South Pacific NWFZ at the August 1983 South Pacific Forum meeting, the regional South Pacific island state body that had first endorsed the concept in 1975 as then proposed by New Zealand, Fiji and Papua New Guinea. Others included appointing an Ambassador for Disarmament and establishing a Peace Research Institute at the Australian National University (later to be defunded by the conservative Howard Government).

The Hawke Government continued to pursue the SPNFZ initiative at the August 1984 South Pacific Forum meeting, this time with the added support of the new Lange Labour Government. Out of the 1984 Forum Meeting, the Hawke Government was successful in forming and chairing a working group of Forum states to negotiate an actual treaty. The drafting group met over the ensuing year, and the final draft of South Pacific NWFZ Treaty was opened for signature at the ensuing 1985 South Pacific Forum meeting.⁴⁶

The influence of the anti-nuclear movement in galvanizing the Hawke Government's initiative in advancing and successfully negotiating the SPNFZ Treaty over this period is confirmed in now declassified Cabinet documents relating to decisions on this initiative and in the memoirs and public statements of key players at the time, especially the Australian Foreign Minister, Bill Hayden. Writing in his memoir of the period, Hayden recalled: "At the 1984 election there was so much concern...that a Nuclear Disarmament Party...fielded candidates in the election...I instinctively recognised that we would have to move quickly and decisively to establish our ascendancy on peace and disarmament issues."⁴⁷ He continued:

In the light of the mounting protests...Hawke suddenly reassessed things and I was off and away with a raft of arms control policies. The initiatives and activities included: the appointment of an Ambassador for Disarmament; pressure for the negotiation of an effective comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty; work on a treaty outlawing all forms of chemical biological warfare... condemnation of French nuclear testing in the Pacific; the successful pursuit of a nuclear-free-zone for the South Pacific.⁴⁸

At the same time as responding positively to the upsurge in the peace movement, however, both Prime Minister Hawke and Hayden were concerned that any disarmament initiatives, including the South Pacific nuclear free zone initiative, avoid unnecessary conflict with the US in the context of the ANZUS alliance. Hayden noted in his memoirs that, if the Left sought to “abrogate” the alliance unilaterally following the New Zealand Labour Party’s example, this could “produce an unsatisfactory overall political outcome for Labor”.⁴⁹

Bob Hawke, for his part, emphasised that his government, “while recommitting Australia to our major defence alliance” was “determined to play a significant part in the cause of peace and disarmament” on the basis that “whatever the strengths of our economic and social programs at home, they would be futile if a nuclear conflagration occurred”.⁵⁰ In relation to his government’s SPNFZ initiative, he noted his determination to go ahead with the initiative despite the opposition of the US Reagan Administration, but that he had explained to the US that the zone did not differ from or go beyond the Tlatelolco Treaty provisions, which the US had already signed and ratified, and emphasised that Australia advanced the initiative with the full support of all the South Pacific regional states.⁵¹

References to the SPNFZ initiative in 1985 Cabinet-in-Confidence documents, declassified in 2013, indicate an intention to implement the ALP’s Platform policy of promoting “the development of zones of peace and nuclear free zones in the Indian and Pacific Oceans”.⁵² The documents noted that general support for the initiative could be expected “especially the proposed bans on testing and stationing of nuclear weapons” but that it was anticipated that the treaty would encounter criticism from both sides of politics: “both groups that see it as eroding ANZUS and Australian security interests and groups that feel it does not go far enough”.⁵³ The progress report for Cabinet prepared by Foreign Minister Bill Hayden argued that the “The conclusion of a SPNFZ would be a significant arms control achievement and one that would strengthen regional security” and that it was “designed to maintain the security advantages afforded to the South West Pacific through the ANZUS Treaty and the United States security presence in the region”.⁵⁴

The reference in the Cabinet documents to the ALP Platform policy on a Pacific nuclear free zone bears witness to the influence of antinuclear campaigning in the sense of reflecting the success of lobbying inside and outside the Party by antinuclear groups and advocates. From the late 1970s onwards, there was an increasing emphasis on disarmament policies and positions at ALP Federal Conferences and its policy platforms. Responding in part to the concerns raised by successive Nuclear Free Pacific movement conferences and campaigns, the 1979 Federal ALP Conference adopted a policy of support for a “nuclear free zone proposal in the Southern Pacific area”.⁵⁵ This was reaffirmed at the July 1982 Conference a year before the Hawke Government came to power in the form of a Conference resolution stating, *inter alia*, that “Conference, noting Labor’s platform commitment to ‘support a nuclear free zone proposal in the Southern Pacific area.’”⁵⁶ Following the successful negotiation of the SPNFZ treaty and its signature at the Rarotonga South Pacific Forum in 1985, the treaty entered into force on 11 December 1986. Four of the five nuclear weapon states have now signed and ratified all the relevant protocols, while the

United States signed the protocols in 1996 and is currently considering ratification in legislation before the US Congress.

Conclusion

The 1985 South Pacific NWFZ Treaty provisions fell well short of what antinuclear movements were seeking at the time and have been seeking since. It does not prevent nuclear-armed ship visits and transit within the region, although it does leave open the possibility of individual countries instituting such bans within their own territorial waters and ports, as indeed New Zealand has instituted from 1984 and has become a bipartisan position of both New Zealand Labour and conservative government. Nor does it ban nuclear-weapon-related C3I bases, a source of particular concern given their potential for becoming nuclear targets and their role in nuclear-war-fighting. Further, the Treaty does not eschew reliance on extended nuclear deterrence in the context of military alliances with nuclear powers, such as Australia's ANZUS alliance with the United States.

Despite these problems, the Rarotonga Treaty has contributed to some significant partial disarmament and antinuclear advances that do go part of the way to responding to the sustained antinuclear campaigning for such a zone from the 1960s to the 1980s. It has served to lock nuclear powers into not testing nuclear weapons anywhere in the test zone, not only on land but also on the high seas. It does prevent land-based nuclear weapon stationing by nuclear powers in the region (something that the NPT does not prevent). Further, it serves to lock Australia more firmly into a legally binding commitment not to develop nuclear weapons itself. At a regional level, the Rarotonga Treaty provides a degree of reassurance to neighbouring Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries that Australia is not intending to develop nuclear weapons (ten years after the Rarotonga Treaty Indonesia took the lead in negotiating the 1995 Southeast Asian Nuclear Free Zone Bangkok Treaty). Finally, the Rarotonga Treaty membership does serve to bring Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Island countries into a wider network of regional nuclear free zone treaty members that in recent years has become an active lobbying force for global initiatives on disarmament as well as the spread of nuclear free zones into new regions, not least the Middle East.

Contemporary anti-nuclear movements in Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific were disappointed at the partial scope of the 1985 South Pacific nuclear free zone treaty and its failure to fully disengage the region from involvement and complicity in nuclear threats, regional and global. Yet despite its limited and partial nature, the Rarotonga Treaty remains a positive step forward in a regional context. It may still – by means of the existing nuclear bans that it imposes, the confidence building role that it plays, the future opportunities for strengthening the treaty, and its international lobbying role as a part of an international network of NWFZ member states – justify the 25 years of antinuclear advocacy that contributed to the treaty's negotiation.

The partial success in securing the negotiation of the SPNFZ Treaty remains a testament to the commitment and resilience of the various antinuclear movements in the South Pacific, New Zealand and Australia in their sustained pursuit of this particular antinuclear initiative through many changes in national governments and a constant flux of conflicts and crises in the international environment. It is unlikely that the culminating Hawke, Lange and Pacific Island governments' negotiation of the Rarotonga Treaty would have occurred without the cumulative inputs, agenda-setting, petitions, sustained lobbying of political parties, creative protest actions, and large scale rallies, of the three waves of antinuclear campaigning from the 1960s to the 1980s.

Michael Hamel-Green has published extensively on regional security and regional arms control and disarmament, including a comprehensive study of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty and a brief account of the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement. His most

recent work includes studies of regional denuclearization in Northeast Asia and the Middle East, and a forthcoming book chapter on the role of nuclear weapon free zones as multilateral regional initiatives contributing to global disarmament. He is currently working on a negotiation history of the existing six nuclear weapon free zone treaties.

Endnotes

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- ² For overviews of NWFZs, see: Jozef Goldblat, *Arms Control: the New Guide to Negotiations and Agreements* (London: Sage Publications and International Peace Research Institute, 2002), 196-219; Michael Hamel-Green, "Peeling the orange: regional paths to a nuclear-weapon-free world," *Disarmament Forum*, UNIDIR, no.2 (2011): 3-14; Ramesh Thakur, ed., *Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zones* (London: Macmillan, 1998); Pericles Alves and Daiana Cipollone, eds. *Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in the 21st Century* (New York and Geneva: UNIDIR, 1997).
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- ¹¹ Ralph Summy, "Australian Peace Movement 1960-67: A Study of Dissent" (Master's Thesis, University of Sydney, 1973), 164.
- ¹² John Murphy, *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia's Vietnam War* (St Leonards NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1973), 125.
- ¹³ Kevin Clements, *Back from the Brink: The Creation of a Nuclear-Free New Zealand* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin New Zealand, 1988), 53.
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