

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

FRANCE

"A grand exposition of Easter Island and its enigmatic civilization" was inaugurated on the 20th of April in the Musée Aquitaine of Bordeaux and will continue until September 15. The exhibition, the most important one concerning Easter Island ever to be organized in France, is presented as a "voyage" from Polynesia and combines collections that never before have left Chile, together with pieces from French, Belgium and Italian museums.

The first part of the exposition is dedicated to Polynesia, whose culture and peoples are linked with those of Easter Island, with a hundred sculptures, cult and navigation objects, clothes, jewelry and domestic implements. The second part, the most important, is dedicated to the Chilean island, inhabited by Polynesians since the year 400 and whose great statues of stone were discovered by Europeans in 1722. One of these statues, a *moai* of 3.5 meters, figures in the exhibition together with other sculptures of more modest dimensions, but equally fascinating. Completing the exhibition are four of the 20 existing objects with *rongorongo* writing from Easter Island.

El Mercurio de Valparaiso, April 1996

Readers of *RNJ* will recognize this exhibition as the one that previously was shown in Milan and Barcelona where the *moai* temporarily lost its head (see *RNJ* Vol.9, No.4:121).

UNITED STATES

Easter Island statue replicas were displayed at the 1996 Rockefeller Center Flower and Garden Show in New York City in April. About twice life-sized, these truly ugly replications obviously were created by someone who had never seen a real *moai*.

ECUADOR

A Japanese explorer, Kenichi Horie, set off from Ecuador in March to sail alone across the Pacific, his destination the Galapagos Islands and then Japan. His boat is made from recycled aluminum cans [we are not making this up] and is powered by solar energy. The 31-foot boat was expected to pass O'ahu, if on track, sometime in May. This is the first attempt at a trans-Pacific voyage in a solar-powered vessel. Obviously a guy thing. Mercifully, Horie is not trying to prove anything about settlement voyages, but wants to draw attention to the use of "clean" energy.

WHAT'S NEW IN POLYNESIA

TAHITI

More than 300 people took to the streets of Tahiti in February to protest the building of a controversial hotel on the outskirts of Pape'ete where preliminary excavations have

uncovered burials and traces of an ancient village. The adjacent beach is a traditional native fishing spot. The land now is fenced off from the local population and is under police guard. The hotel project has been opposed by Tahitians since 1991. Protesters note that no independent environmental study was done; the only survey was by the company doing the project. A number of legal actions are pending against the development, plans for which include an 8-story hotel with 350 rooms plus 12 over-water bungalows.

The March elections for French Polynesia's territorial assembly were postponed until May 17. An official reason is to give the new statute of internal autonomy time to be put into place. But the unofficial reason is to allow time for the bad p.r. from the nuclear weapon tests to fade into memory. Reports say that President Chirac will visit French Polynesia before the elections to boost the chances of his friend, territorial President Gaston Flosse. Flosse is hoping to take the "edge off" the campaign for independence.

Pacific News Bulletin 11(3) 1996

French government officials admit that radioactive material leaked from Moruroa Atoll during the recent tests. Although France claims the leaks are "not dangerous" there are concerns about long-term impacts on the environment and people of the area. Now that the nuclear program has ended, French President Chirac committed to a treaty banning testing in the region. French exporters are welcoming the end of the tests as wine exports were hard hit by boycotts: sales dropped about 15% worldwide and 50% in Japan and northern Europe. Chirac will provide French Polynesia US \$2 billion over the next ten years in order to compensate for loss of revenue from the termination of the nuclear testing program.

Tok Blong Pasifik, Vol. 50(1), 1966.

COOK ISLANDS

A severe cash problem led to the withdrawal of Cook Island currency in 1995. The government of New Zealand has frozen further aid, citing no evidence of reform. Public servants face a 15% pay cut and may get nothing as one bank already has bounded a government pay check for lack of funds. Spending abuses by politicians appear to be part of the problem.

Tok Blong Pasifik, Vol. 50(1), 1966.

FIJI

The VIII Pacific Science Inter-Congress will be held in Suva, Fiji during July 13-17, 1997. Information on this meeting can be had by contacting to Dr. Mahendra Kumar, Secretary-General, % School of Pure & Applied Sciences, University of the South Pacific, PO Box 1168, Suva, Fiji. Fax: (679) 314007.

The Physics and Technology Energy team at the University of the South Pacific (Suva) is investigating the possibilities of using coconut oil as a source for energy. Coconut oil for use in engines is being studied at schools in