

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.

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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

the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Coconut oil has many applications from body oil, cosmetics, soap, cooking diesel and kerosene alternatives. Cold-pressed coconut oil for use in body oils now sells in some areas for \$50 a liter.

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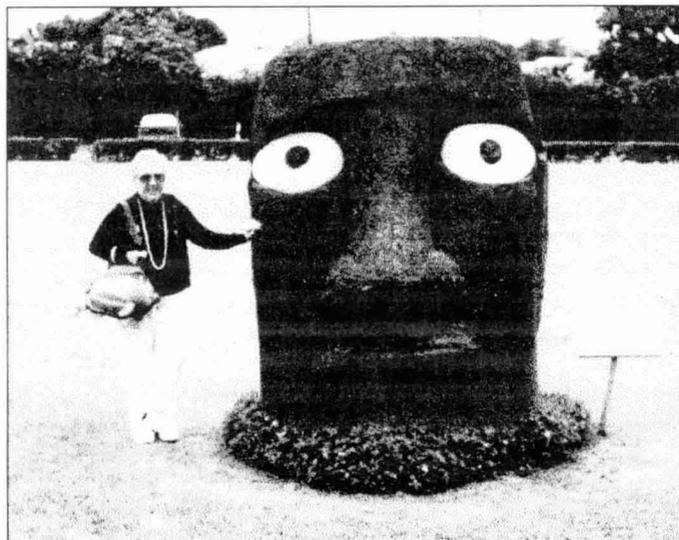
The President of the Republic of Kiribati, Mr Tito Teburoro made a courtesy call to the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji. Teburoro stated that Kiribati students graduating from the USP will eventually take leading positions in the Kiribati community. He sees education as of vital importance to the development of that island country.

A Cooperative Education program between students of the University of Victoria (Canada) and the University of the South Pacific has just been completed. The program studied problems of marine pollution assessment and control. This year's topics were in preparation for a series of course readings for USP Law students; the use of mangroves to combat pollution, and toxicity tests for the study of marine ecology and pollution effects.

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HAWAII

For many years the gardens of the Bishop Museum in Honolulu have been graced by the presence of a casting of a *moai* head from Easter Island. The head, a replica of one that formerly sat in front of Ahu Tongariki (before its restoration), never failed to stun visitors who remarked upon its presence in Hawai'i, not realizing (at first glance) that it is a facsimile. Recently someone has added some fake eyes (see photo). We note with chagrin that it now looks more like Kermit the Frog.



Emily Ross Mulloy poses with the bug-eyed *moai* head, in the gardens of the Bishop Museum, Hawai'i.

WHAT'S NEW IN HANGA ROA

El Mercurio de Valparaiso for 21 April, 1996 reported the following account of a riot on Rapa Nui. The headline read: "Sect Assaults Court on Easter Island." According to the story, a group of 40 youths calling themselves "Messengers of the Moai of Peace" interrupted the court and rescued one of their group, Mateo Tuki Atán, who had been detained for trafficking drugs. Since then there has been continuing tension among the 3000 people on the island.

Faced with an increase in consumption and sales of marijuana cultivated on the island (and whose narcotic effects are supposedly superior to that produced on the continent), the police carried out an operation headed by the national chief of Anti-Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, Hugo Pinochet. They destroyed 600 live plants and an unspecified quantity being dried and packaged in aluminum foil. During the operation two men were detained, one of whom was released as he was judged to be mentally perturbed, and a woman. The woman was released shortly, leaving only Tuki in custody. A large group of youths gathered in front of the tribunal with sticks and machetes and shouted for the release of Tuki. At that time, only three police were on duty were they were unable to prevent the entry of the group into the building. One youth struck the secretary of the court, Bernardo Toro, with a blunt instrument and the group fled with Tuki. Later, a larger number of people gathered at the open market on Calle Policarpo Toro where protests were made against judicial functionaries and police personnel.

The secretary of the court, who has lived 6 years on the island, said that what occurred is very serious and without precedent on the island. He recalled that it is their obligation to suppress drugs and they would not tolerate the action of rescuing a prisoner from the court and menacing administrators.

The *El Mercurio* article stated that "The protagonists are mainly youths who, despite having organized with a laudable objective two years ago, acted contrary to their original intent." The president of the Consejo de Ancianos, Alberto Hotus, said that the group lives on the margin of reality and it is "indispensable that the government concern itself with public education" [?]. Hotus explained that, in the group's concept, growing marijuana is no different than growing squash as they have private land and it damages no one. He added that they have the right to harvest and sell the stuff because there are no alternatives on the island, such as jobs. Hotus lamented that he had personally helped form this group but they had changed their mentality and introduced the marketing of the drug. He recalled that, two years ago, some Frenchmen arrived from Tahiti and proposed the carving of a *moai* one meter tall which could be sent around the world to promote tourism for the island (see *RNJ* Vol.7,1:19). The stone sculpture was called the "Moai of Peace" and currently is in Paris. From this grew the idea of creating a movement they called "Messengers of the Moai of Peace," headed by Mateo Tuki. The group returned from Tahiti and "began to smoke marijuana and dedicate themselves to its cultivation