

Nuclear-free New Zealand (MCH, 2018m)

Page 5 – Sinking the *Rainbow Warrior*

In 1985 New Zealand was basking in its position as leader of the anti-nuclear movement. As a country it had clearly punched above its weight. Then, just before midnight on the evening of 10 July, two explosions ripped through the hull of the Greenpeace flagship *Rainbow Warrior*, which was moored at Marsden Wharf in Auckland.

Hear reaction to the bombing

► Hear radio coverage of the sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior*.

Read the transcript of this file.

Ref:COMP 3, 1985, tk6

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A Portuguese crew member, Fernando Pereira, was killed in the explosions. The *Rainbow Warrior* had been involved in protests over French nuclear testing in the Pacific. French Secret Service (DGSE) agents were sent to prevent it leaving for another protest campaign at Mururoa Atoll.

Two DGSE officers, Dominique Prieur and Alain Mafart, were arrested on 24 July. Both were charged with murder, pleaded

guilty to manslaughter and were sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. The case was a source of considerable embarrassment to the French government. While the attack was on an international organisation rather than New Zealand itself, most New Zealanders did not make such a distinction. The fact that it was committed on New Zealand territory by a supposed friend produced a sense of outrage and a serious deterioration in relations between New Zealand and France.

Greenpeace

Greenpeace is an international environmental organisation founded in Canada in 1971. It is well known for its campaigns to stop nuclear testing and whaling, as well as its stand on other environmental issues such as bottom trawling, global warming, the

France used its influence to threaten New Zealand's access to the important European Economic Community market, and New Zealand exports to France were boycotted. New Zealanders reacted in a similar manner to French imports. Eventually, both countries agreed to allow the United Nations to mediate a settlement.

Almost a year after the bombing, on 8 July 1986, United Nations Secretary-General Javier Perez de

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Updated 3rd edition reference

destruction of forests
and genetic engineering.

The organisation's
official mission
statement says that:

'Greenpeace is an
independent,
campaigning
organisation which uses
non-violent, creative
confrontation to expose
global environmental
problems, and to force
solutions for a green and
peaceful future.
Greenpeace's goal is to
ensure the ability of the
earth to nurture life in
all its diversity.'

Cuellar announced, in a binding
decision, that New Zealand would
receive an apology and
compensation of \$13 million from
France, which was also ordered
not to interfere with New Zealand's
trade negotiations. Dominique
Prieur and Alain Mafart were to
serve their sentences in full on Hao
Atoll in French Polynesia.

In what was seen as the final insult,
both prisoners were released early.
Alain Marfart returned to France
because of 'illness' in 1987, while
Dominique Prieur was repatriated
in May 1988 because she was
pregnant. Both were decorated
and promoted upon their return
home.

This incident did much to promote
what has been described as New
Zealand's 'silent war of independence' and was central to an upsurge
in New Zealand nationalism. There was a sense of having to 'go it
alone' because traditional allies such as the United States and Britain
sat on their hands while France worked to block New Zealand
exports. The failure of Britain and the United States to condemn this
act of terrorism hardened support for a more independent foreign
policy line.

In September 2006 the agent who placed the bomb was named as
Gerard Royal by his brother, Antoine. Their sister, Ségolène Royal,
was the Socialist candidate in the 2007 French presidential
elections.

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