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Aspects of French policy in the Pacific, 1853-1906

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BY THE MIDDLE of the nineteenth century, France had secured the bulk of her present possessions in Melanesia and Polynesia. The events leading up to the Tahitian Protectorate of 1842, the annexation of the Marquesas Islands and the annexation of New Caledonia in 1853 have been adequately analyzed by historians of the Pacific; and some attention has been paid to the fear of further French expansion which helped determine the attitude of the Australian Colonies and New Zealand towards British interests in unoccupied island groups.¹ Whether these fears were groundless or not requires an examination of French sources themselves.²

A discussion of French policy towards an area so far removed from Europe requires a distinction between written orders from Paris and the reports and actions of official and unofficial agents in the Pacific itself. The reactions of the islanders and British, American, and German nationals were influenced more by the latter—except in cases where the Ministry for the Navy and the French Foreign Office had good reason to make the position of the French government particularly clear for the purpose of international agreement. Frequently, too, there were differences of opinion between the two departments whose executive personnel changed rapidly. In addition, the confusion which resulted from the evolution of the Navy's colonial bureaux into an autonomous ministry between 1882 and 1894 did little to improve com-

¹ J.P. Faivre, *l'Expansion Française dans le Pacifique de 1800 à 1842* (Paris, 1953); Y. Person, *La Nouvelle-Calédonie et l'Europe de la Découverte à la Fondation de Nouméa (1774-1854). Extrait de la Revue d'Histoire des Colonies* (Paris, 1953); Jean Ingram Brookes, *International Rivalry in the Pacific Islands 1800-1875* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1941); J.W. Ward, *British Policy in the South Pacific, 1786-1893* (Sydney, 1950); J.R. Baldwin, "England and the French Seizure of the Society Islands," *Journal of Modern History*, X (1938), 212-231.

² The main sources used here are located in the *Archives des Colonies, Ministère de la France d'outre-mer*, Paris, Series Océanie 1-106, and correspondence listed under various island groups in the Archives of the *Ministère des Affaires Étrangères*. In addition to the conventional C.O. and F.O., the following abbreviations have been used: A.C. (*Archives des Colonies*); A.A.E. (*Archives des Affaires Étrangères*); L.M.S. (London Missionary Society); M.M. (*Ministère de la Marine*); T.B.C.P. (Tahiti British Consulate Papers). The last have been used with the permission of the Mitchell Library, Sydney.

munications between Paris and French officers in the Pacific at that period.³

French squadrons had been stationed in South American ports ever since the 1820's. The acquisition of new Pacific posts increased their range and influence. But the traditional policy of protecting French traders and missionaries by ships of the Pacific Naval Division was not uniformly applied after 1850. Cases were examined as they arose; and, in general, less was left to the initiative of naval officers because of the unwillingness of the French Foreign Office to offend Britain and the Australian colonies and because of a change of attitude in official quarters towards the Catholic missions. At various periods after 1881, and continuously after 1894, the affairs of the French colonies were separated from the French Ministry for the Navy which had founded and administered most of them. But tradition died hard—especially in the Pacific where the ships of the South American Station were called on to police French waters, arbitrate in the New Hebrides and elsewhere, and send in reports on the activities of other powers.

At the Paris end, many of the Ministers for the Navy or for the Colonies were silent about the Pacific: office was too short; or problems requiring their opinion about policy did not arise. Those who were interested in the Pacific, like the Ministers for the Navy, Ducos, Chasseloup-Laubat and Jauréguiberry, or Under-Secretary de la Porte, drew in great measure on the knowledge of the Colonial Directors attached to their departments. The hands of Zoepffel, head of the colonial section of the Navy for a decade after 1860, and Michaux, in the same office between 1878 and 1882, are evident in numerous drafts and minutes. Official policy during the period was influenced by four main considerations. Care was taken to allay the suspicions of missionary and commercial interests in Australia and New Zealand concerning French naval activities and the growing penal settlement in New Caledonia. The share of the French administration at Tahiti in the Pacific labor traffic in the 1860's and 1870's had to be reduced. German and American interests in Polynesia and British settlers in the New Hebrides required close attention. Finally; great economic developments were expected in French territories from the future Panama Canal. This hope had been voiced in the French Parliament as early as 1844 as a justification of French expansion. But, on the whole, the promise of the Canal

³ Between 1850 and 1901, there were nine Ministers for the Navy and the Colonies, three Colonial Directors attached to the Ministry for the Navy, eight Under-Secretaries of State for the Colonies and nine Ministers for the Colonies. After 1882, the Under-Secretary took over the work of the Navy's *Direction des Colonies* till the new Colonial Ministry was created in 1894.

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was not given much tangible support during the latter half of the century in the form of an increased share in Pacific sailing and steamer traffic. Trade remained largely in the hands of British and American firms; Papeete and Noumea became entrepôt ports between Sydney, Auckland, and San Francisco. And the profits from coconut oil, copra, pearl-shell and cattle-raising attracted relatively few French settlers till the boom in New Caledonian nickel towards the end of the nineteenth century.

The annexation of New Caledonia aroused a small amount of patriotic protest in Australia and New Zealand. But France was an ally in the Crimean War; and the penal settlement was not really a matter of concern till escaped and freed convicts reached Queensland and Auckland in the late 1870's and 1880's. A new avenue of Pacific trade was open for the growing port of Sydney. The first to take advantage of it was Captain Grandell, trepang-collector and blackbird, who was sent in October, 1853, for supplies for the hungry French settlement, bearing to Australia tidings of the annexation.

For the Marist Fathers on New Caledonia who had added their signatures to the treaty between the French and the local chiefs the annexation was the last major victory for the alliance between Catholic missionaries and the French navy. After 1850, little was done to improve their position elsewhere in the islands, except at Tonga. The last despatch ordering a naval officer to assist actively the Catholics was prepared by Captain Lavaud, Commandant of the French establishments at Tahiti. Its terms summed up the policy of the previous decade:

Je sais que la religion dans ces mers désigne la nationalité; Catholique ou Française, Protestant ou Anglais, sont identiques; le nombre des Protestants y étant considerable, la France que l'on sait Catholique, se trouve placée dans une mauvaise condition dont elle ne sortira qu'alors que le Catholicisme y sera en faveur; ainsi est-il de notre devoir et de notre politique de donner à ces ministres toute l'assistance de notre pouvoir.⁴

With these orders, the commander of the corvette, *Cocyle*, was sent to Tonga where he extracted a fine on behalf of a French trader and reported on the lack of progress made by the Catholic mission. Between 1852 and 1861, the Wesleyans there were dismayed to see the tricolor five times in the roadsteads. In 1855, the island was visited by the Commandant of Tahiti himself to investigate complaints by the Catholics that their converts were not allowed a full share in the Tui Tonga's native government. Commandant Dubouzet set little store by these

⁴ A. C. *Océanie* 60. Lavaud to Capt. Gizoline, January 24, 1850, encl. in Lavaud to M. M., February 6, 1850.

complaints; but he did arrange for a treaty with King George of Tonga which guaranteed to the French trading rights equal to those of other nations and freedom for the Catholics to preach.⁵ In 1860, the mission received further help from the Navy when five Catholic missionaries were landed by Captain Huchet de Cintré; and a new clause to the treaty required equal privileges for Catholics in the government of the island.⁶ In Paris, the English ambassador, Cowley, lodged complaints on behalf of the Wesleyans, without effect.⁷ In 1861, a new treaty was drawn up requiring King George to allow Catholic converts to act as native judges.⁸ Once more Cowley passed on "constant remonstrances" from the Protestant mission and echoed its fears of French annexation plans, the existence of which were roundly denied by the Minister for the Navy, Chasseloup-Laubat.⁹

The Catholics, however, were falling out of favor with the Ministry for the Navy as evidence came from Tahiti in the 1860's that the unratified French protectorate of 1844 over the Gambier Islands sheltered a Catholic theocracy unfriendly to French officials and traders. Accordingly, Chasseloup-Laubat instructed the Commandant of Tahiti that ships of the Naval Division were only to be used for mission protection in "les cas imprévus et d'extrême urgence."¹⁰ And this line of policy remained largely unaltered for the rest of the century.

Consular protection of nationals in the 1850's and early 1860's was limited to Melbourne, San Francisco, and Hawaii. Two appointments were made for New Zealand in 1868 and 1872. There was no paid agent at Samoa or Fiji, where the amount of French trade did not warrant the expense of full consular posts. Indeed, the French Foreign Office thought as early as 1860 that Fiji would fall under British rule; and this view persisted in Paris, despite requests from Tahiti and New Caledonia for a full consul there, and despite suggestions from the French consulate at Melbourne that France should annex before England did.¹¹

A major problem which concerned the Navy and the Foreign Office

⁵ *A. E. E. Iles Diverses* V. Dubouzet to *M. M.*, January 9, 1855, encl. in *M. M. to A. E.*, August 14, 1855; *A. C. Océanie* 40. "Convention entre le Tupou, Roi des îles Tonga, d'une part, au nom de Sa Majesté Napoléon III, Empereur des Français, M. Dubouzet, Chef de Division, Gouverneur des Établissements Français de l'Océanie, d'autre part. Tonga, le 9 janvier 1855," encl. in Dubouzet to *M. M.*, September 14, 1855.

⁶ *A. A. E., Iles Diverses* V. Huchet de Cintré, *Rapport*, April 19, 1860, encl. in *M. M. to A. E.*, September 4, 1860.

⁷ *Ibid.* Cowley to *A. E.*, July 24, 1860.

⁸ *Ibid.* Capt. l'Évêque, *Rapport*, November 21, 1861, encl. in *M. M. to A. E.*, January 21, 1862.

⁹ *Ibid.* Cowley to *A. E.*, June 4, 1866; Chasseloup-Laubat to *A. E.*, June 13, 1866.

¹⁰ *A. C. Océanie* 2. Chasseloup-Laubat to de la Roncière, June 4, 1864.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 118. *A. E. to M. M.*, September 4, 1860; *M. M. to Direction des Colonies*, July 15, 1872.

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from the 1860's on was the regulation and supervision of France's share in the Pacific labor traffic. Officially, a system of indentured labor in Polynesia and recruiting from the New Hebrides for New Caledonia was encouraged. In reality, the line between blackbirding and voluntary recruitment was thin. In the eastern Pacific, the interest of Paris in indentured labor was a reflection of the attempts of the local administration to turn Tahiti into a plantation colony. In the 1860's, the chief recruiter was the Polynesian Plantation and Coffee Company, financed from London. The company gave a lead to other planters by receiving permission and financial help from the administration to import Chinese and island labor.

The main features of recruiting policy in the French establishments themselves were use of administration schooners and financial subsidies to planters from the administration's Agricultural Bank. Conditions of indenture and employment were laid down by ordinance in March, 1864, and approved in Paris.¹² Women and children were allowed to accompany both Chinese and other immigrants; standards of housing, food, and clothing were maintained by official inspection; and repatriation was made compulsory at the planters' expense after the termination of seven year contracts in the case of the Chinese and three year contracts for Polynesians and Melanesians. Similar conditions were laid down for recruiting from the New Hebrides to New Caledonia. In both areas, the administration was cautioned to keep clear of Peruvian slavers operating in the islands and to send a French immigration official with every schooner. The extent of French operations for Tahiti can best be illustrated by a table.¹³

INDENTURED LABOR FOR TAHITI AND DEPENDENCIES

YEAR	Tongareva	Cook Islands	Gilbert Islands	Tuamotu	New Hebrides	Hongkong
1862	98					
1864		96				300
1865						693
1866	49					
1867			399	15		
1870			192		73	
1872			96			
1880			200		35	
1883			85			
1884-1892			197		133	

¹² *Bulletin Officiel des Etablissements Francais de l'Océanie*, 1864, 127.

¹³ The table is compiled from the reports of officials at Tahiti in *A. C. Océanie*, 35, 38, and 108; *A. A. E. Iles Diverses* VII. Complete figures for the New Hebrides and New Caledonia are not available.

Thus, between 1862 and 1892, some 1,668 Polynesians and Melaneseans and 993 Chinese were imported on contract into Tahiti. Most of the Pacific islanders were repatriated at the end of their term. The Chinese, however, after the collapse of the Plantation Company in 1872, either drifted to other islands, or became planters and traders on their own account, forming the nucleus of the large Asiatic population in the territory today.¹⁴

Towards the end of the 1870's, two difficulties emerged from this policy which made the Ministry for the Navy hesitate to approve further immigration. Traders at Tahiti began to complain of commercial competition from Chinese settlers. Reports of abuses in the Gilbert Islands on the part of local schooners compromised official sponsorship. In 1878, the Minister for the Navy wrote to the Governor of Tahiti, disapproving of a plan to set up an Immigration Bank, backed by the Administration, with credit facilities for planters' hiring imported labor.¹⁵ In 1884, reports from British naval officers on the methods used by the French schooner, *Forçade la Roquette*, in the Gilberts resulted in an official enquiry by the Minister for the Navy, Admiral Galiber, which exonerated the administration but which terminated its financial aid to the recruiters.¹⁶

The dream of an agricultural colony faded: Tahitians were unwilling to part with their land; still less were they willing to work as hired labor—which planters were not wealthy enough individually to import from elsewhere.

The outstanding questions after 1880 for French policy in the Pacific were the consolidation of sovereignty rights over the Leeward Islands and the future of the New Hebrides. The independence of both groups had been assured by conventions with Great Britain, in 1847 and 1878, respectively. Efforts to remove these diplomatic obstacles were determined by events in the islands themselves and by colonial policies in other parts of the world. The outcome of difficulties in the Leeward Islands and the New Hebrides was that France kept out of other independent groups—New Guinea, the Cook Islands, and Samoa—at a time when voices in Australia and New Zealand were insisting on their future as British possessions.

Little surprise was caused by the formal annexation of Tahiti and

¹⁴ By 1907 there were 459 Chinese in the French establishments. According to the 1951 census, their number has risen to some 6,665—mainly by immigration from San Francisco and Canton in the 1930's.

¹⁵ *A. C. Océanie*, 34. Pothuau to Planche, July 25, 1878.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* M. M. to A. E., November 20, 1885; Galiber to Lacascade, May 16, 1886.

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its dependencies in 1880. The protectorate of 1842 had been rendered a legal fiction by increasing French control of internal government in the group. The death of Queen Pomare in 1877 and uncertainties over her successor served as a pretext to end the anomaly of a colony without a constitution and the protected rights of a Tahitian dynasty influenced by British and American factions.

It was taken for granted by Governor Planche, who engineered the annexation, that France would extend her sovereignty to the Leeward Islands, an important group some eighty miles to the northwest of Tahiti. For over thirty years, the independent kingdoms of Raiatea, Huahine, and Borabora had remained strategic and commercial thorns in the side of the French administration. The recent history of the Leeward Islands had been a succession of complaints from European settlers there and threats of intervention by American and German warships. The old mission codes of laws, interpreted by native judges, had proved inadequate to settle problems of local land tenure and the liquor traffic. By the early 1880's, there were just over eighty European traders and planters in the group. The amount of European capital invested there had risen to some £67,000—an important part of which belonged to the German trading firm of Godeffroy. The local branch of the firm, managed by the German Consul at Tahiti, transported its interests to Raiatea in the late 1870's to avoid French customs duties and to set up a coaling station. German naval protection soon followed. On the arrival of a German man-of-war in 1879, some of the chiefs of Huahine were persuaded to sign a treaty of trade and friendship—though similar overtures made at Raiatea and Borabora were unsuccessful.¹⁷

There is no evidence that Germany had political designs on the group. But French fears were sufficiently aroused for the Minister for the Navy, Jauréguiberry, to urge on the French Foreign Office the necessity for the extension of French sovereignty in the area:

L'attitude des Allemands, dont les convoitises ont obtenu déjà aux Samoa un commencement de satisfaction, se fait ouvertement jour dans les autres Iles de l'Archipel. La situation qu'ont acquise les Américains des États-Unis dans la partie de l'Archipel soumise à notre Protectorat nous impose l'obligation d'affermir sans délai notre suprématie dans ces parages.¹⁸

In September, 1879, Governor Planche was ordered to go ahead with the annexation of Tahiti; and his successor, Chessé, who arrived in 1880,

¹⁷ T. B. C. P. *Out-Letters*, 1877-1888. Miller to F. O., May 10, 1879; L. M. S. *South Seas*, 36. Pearse to L. M. S., June 20, 1880.

¹⁸ A. C. *Océanie*, 1. Jauréguiberry to de Freycinet, August 19, 1879.

organized a request for protection from some of the chiefs of Raiatea where the protectorate flag was hoisted on April 9 of the same year.¹⁹ According to a letter from the King of Raiatea and his followers to a British naval officer, the French had successfully played up local fears of German intervention.²⁰

The British Consul at Tahiti, Miller, lodged a formal protest, citing the 1847 convention on the independence of the group, and indicated that the British navy would not recognize the new flag.²¹ Miller was not convinced that Germany wanted to intervene; and he thought the French-inspired request for protection was "to be made use of as the basis of some ulterior proposal from the French to the British Government for the latter to consent to set aside the Convention of 1847."²²

The guess was shrewd enough; the *fait accompli* was so used in later negotiations. But Miller did not know that the French Foreign Office had approved of the Leewards venture in the belief that the British government would assent in return for the extension of British rights over territory in West Africa.²³ By the end of 1880, however, it became clear that the annulment of the 1847 Convention was not to be so simple: Protests were received from German commercial interests in Berlin; and Franco-British relations in the Leeward Islands became involved with negotiations over the Newfoundland fisheries.²⁴ While the protectorate flag remained over Raiatea, the date for the joint abrogation of the 1847 agreement was repeatedly postponed. The Fisheries Convention was signed between France and Britain in 1885. But, so long as the Newfoundland Legislature refused to ratify it, there was danger that the French government might enforce its clauses by naval action. To counter this danger, the British Foreign Secretary, Rosebery, and the French Ambassador, Waddington, reached an agreement in June, 1886, whereby France would await the Newfoundland Legislature's decision if England renounced the 1847 convention.²⁵ At the Colonial Office, Lord Granville

¹⁹ A. A. E. *Iles Diverses* V. Chessé, *Note sur les Iles Sous le Vent*, January 22, 1882.

²⁰ L. M. S. *South Seas*, 36. King Tahitoe and Chiefs to Capt. Hervey a Court, April 30, 1880, trans. encl. in Pearse to L. M. S., 20 June, 1880.

²¹ T. B. C. P. *Out-Letters*, 1877-1888. Miller to Chessé, April 19, 1880.

²² *Ibid.* Miller to F. O., April 24, 1880.

²³ Over the port of Cotonou, in what is now French Dahomey. *Documents Diplomatiques Français*, Series 1, III, 47.

²⁴ *Ibid.* De Freycinet to de Clanceaux (Chargé d'affaires, Berlin) July 22, 1880. For the Fisheries dispute, see F. O. 27/2838 and 2839, Public Record Office.

²⁵ The terms of Waddington's note to Rosebery were: "La France s'engagerait à maintenir les conclusions qu'elle a consenties dans l'arrangement signé par les deux gouvernements (i. e. the Fisheries Convention) et à les mettre en execution aussitôt que le législature de Terre-Neuve ratifiera ledit arrangement. De son côté l'Angleterre renoncerait définitivement à la convention de 1847 relative aux îles sous le vent de Tahiti." F. O. 27/2838. Waddington to Rosebery, June 23, 1886.

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was not in favor of this step "without obtaining an equivalent in return. . . ." ²⁶ In July, 1886, Rosebery swung round to this viewpoint and carefully separated the two questions, while agreeing to recognize the Raiatean Protectorate provisionally.

The Fisheries Convention of 1885 was not ratified; and in 1887, the Leeward Islands question was settled in the Paris Convention on the New Hebrides. To Lord Salisbury, it did not appear ". . . desirable, or indeed practicable to remit to an aboriginal administration an island which has been for seven years under French government." ²⁷ The 1847 convention was abrogated. The long delay had an important influence on the French position in the islands themselves (which was not as strong as Salisbury thought) and in other parts of the Pacific. French naval officers settled European complaints over the heads of native courts, appointed native officials and were forced to back up their appointments with a naval bombardment of Raiatea in 1887. None of this made the task of administering the group any easier when it was finally annexed in the same year.

The fear of German expansion which had made the Leeward Islands a matter for concern also affected the relationship between the Navy and Catholic missions. In 1882, the cooperation which had weakened in the 1860's was definitely brought to an end by Jauréguiberry. He warned the commander of the Pacific Naval Division that help for missionaries, in the form of transport and protection, could no longer be given:

Il importe, en outre, de reconnaître que les missions catholiques de l'Océanie sont loin d'avoir maintenant le caractère exclusivement français qu'elles ont conservé pendant longtemps; à diverses reprises, les Contre-Amiraux, vos prédécesseurs, ont signalé au Département la présence dans leurs rangs d'étrangers et notamment les sujets Allemands. Le fait doit rendre plus circonspects encore les commandants de nos bâtiments. ²⁸

Thus, when a request came from the Bishop of Fiji for free transport of French missionaries—on the traditional grounds that they were developing "l'influence française avec les bienfaits de la civilisation"—it was rejected out of hand. ²⁹

Elsewhere in the Pacific in the 1880's, the Ministry for the Navy kept a close watch on German activities. A German threat to send more warships to prevent abuses in the labor traffic caused anxiety in 1884; the French Foreign Office was kept fully informed of German interests and

²⁶ F. O. 27/2839. C. O. to F. O., July 6, 1886.

²⁷ *British and Foreign State Papers*, 1887-1888, LXXIX, 542-544.

²⁸ A. C. *Océanie*, 2. Jauréguiberry to Landolfe, September 23, 1882.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 118. Bishop Videt to M. M., May 11, 1888.

landholdings in Fiji and the threat of German annexation in Samoa in 1885.³⁰ But the Ministry for the Navy was not allowed to use this information as the basis for counter-measures while the Leeward Islands were under discussion. Both ministries were considerably embarrassed when news arrived in 1882 that a French naval officer had demanded a commercial treaty during the visit of the *Hugon* to Rarotonga in September of the previous year. Jauréguiberry hastened to assure the French Foreign Minister, de Freycinet, that the commander of the *Hugon* had acted on his own initiative—and contrary to general instructions to avoid arousing British suspicions about French aims in the Pacific.³¹

For the same reasons, treaties of friendship which had been prepared by Jauréguiberry for Admiral Landolfe to execute at Samoa and Tonga in 1882 were postponed after French intervention at Raiatea.³² In 1884, the commander of the French warship, *Kerguelen*, was ordered to proceed with them—if he learned at Tahiti that England had approved of French actions in the Leewards.³³ But a minute from the Foreign Minister, Jules Ferry, quashed even harmless treaty-making “. . . tant que les questions pendantes aux Iles Sous le Vent de Taïti n’auront point été résolues et tant que nous aurons à nous préoccuper de l’agitation créée par les colonies australiennes.”³⁴ The effects of this order lasted for some time after Ferry himself had fallen from office. A request from Tonga in 1885 for official ratification of early treaties with France was refused; a request from the “Queen and Chiefs” of Easter Island for protection was ignored, and no protest was made when Chile prepared to annex in 1888; the extension of New Zealand jurisdiction over the Kermadecs passed without comment.³⁵

French policy in the New Hebrides was similarly influenced by the Leewards question—though the ground for intervention had been better prepared from New Caledonia. As early as 1875, the Minister for the Navy, de Montaignac, had pressed for some form of administration short of annexation in the group; but his plans were cut short by a change of

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 5 bis. A. E. to M. M., March 2, 1884; *ibid.*, 2 bis. Steubel, *Deutsche Interessen in der Sudsee; Deutsche Land Reklamationen auf Fidji*, 1883, copy encl. in de Courcil (Ambassador, Berlin) to A. E., January 2, 1885; A. E. to M. M., January 22, 1885.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 5. M. M. to A. E., April 25, 1883.

³² *Ibid.*, 2. M. M. to Landolfe, September 23, 1882. No show of force was to be made during the negotiation of the treaties. “Lorsque les coups de canon sont tirés contre les populations désarmées,” wrote Jauréguiberry—who had experience of this in West Africa—“les indigènes se réfugient dans l’intérieur et conservent comme seul souvenir des idées de vengeance et de représailles.”

³³ A. A. E. *Iles Diverses*, VII. M. M. to A. E., March 26, 1884.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Ferry, Note, April 3, 1884, encl. in A. E. to M. M., April 9, 1884.

³⁵ *Ibid.* M. M. to A. E., December 12, 1885; A. E. to M. M., December 31, 1885; de la Porte to A. E., October 27, 1888.

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government.³⁶ During the last years of the 1870's, the arguments for intervention were strengthened. The visit of Commadore Goodenough to Noumea and the New Hebrides in 1874 caused misgivings among local officials as to the nature of his mission; the Governor of New Caledonia firmly believed that the Missionary, Paton, was organizing British intervention in 1877; a report by a French naval officer in 1879—after the independence of the group had been recognized by Britain and France—emphasized the value of land and labor so near to New Caledonia and was instrumental in bringing the views of the Ministry for the Navy into line with those held by the administration at Noumea.³⁷ In 1882, the Minister for the Navy was requested by the Minister for the Interior to use the New Hebrides as a penal colony.³⁸ Jauréguiberry hesitated to go this far, since, he thought, there was little France might offer Britain in return for the abrogation of the 1878 convention. The following year, however, came news of the Inter-Colonial Convention at Sydney which had clamored for British annexation; at the same time Jauréguiberry learned of the formation of the *Compagnie Calédonienne* to exploit the group with French settlers and capital. These two pieces of information he passed on to the French Foreign Office and advised early annexation.³⁹

But the Foreign Office was not to be persuaded while the Leeward Islands and the Fisheries were still under discussion. The matter was not taken up again till 1886, when the Colonial Secretary, de la Porte, was caught between his desire to respect the 1878 agreements and pressure from the Governor of New Caledonia to end the loss of French lives and property which had recently caused French troops to be sent to the New Hebrides. De la Porte advised the Governor that he approved his measures for restoring order; furthermore, he favored the *Compagnie Calédonienne* with a subsidy of 50,000 fr. voted in the French Parliament to assist immigration and trade in the group and to establish a postal service with Nouméa.⁴⁰ De la Porte's policy was continued by the Ministry for the Navy till the establishment of the Joint Naval Commission in 1887. Order to Rear-Admiral Lefevre, at the end

³⁶ *A. A. E. Nouvelles-Hebrides* III. De Montaignac to *A. E.*, August 27, December 7, 1875.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, IV. Governor Olry to *M. M.*, May 15, October 27, 1877; Du Petit-Thouars to *M. M.*, April 22, 1879.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, IX. Fallières to *M. M.*, September 13, 1882.

³⁹ *Ibid.* *M. M.* to *A. E.*, July 8, 1883. The foundation of the *Compagnie* was in large measure the work of John Higginson, a naturalized French subject, who played a leading part in the exploitation of New Hebridean labor and land. See, *Status de la société anonyme 'Compagnie Calédonienne des Nouvelles-Hébrides'* (Nouméa, 1882); J. M. Pelissier, *Profils coloniaux* (Paris, 1892), 93-96.

⁴⁰ *A. A. E. Nouvelles-Hébrides* IX. De la Porte to Le Boucher, December 13, 1886.

of that year, stated that his duty in protecting the ships of the *Compagnie Calédonienne*, its land and postal service was to take on" . . . un caractere plus militant."

"Cette politique consiste à combattre l'influence anglaise par tous les moyens légaux, à éliminer l'archipel autant que possible les intérêts britanniques et à leur substituer les intérêts français."⁴¹

The work of the Naval Commission was closely watched from Paris. An important number of land cases between English settlers and the French Company were settled in 1900—largely in favor of the French—to the satisfaction of the French Consul at Sydney.⁴² The final result of the policy initiated by de la Porte and helped by naval arbitration was to equalize pressure from Australian missionary and commercial interests and produce the stalemate of condominium in 1906.

Two principal themes occupied French statesmen and administrators concerned with French policy in the Pacific during the latter half of the nineteenth century: trade and the opening of the Panama Canal for the commercial development of New Caledonia and Tahiti, and the consolidation under French rule of islands adjacent to these groups in the face of German and British competition. The first was never realized in terms of commercial assimilation to France because of the nature of Pacific trade and the preponderance of British and American markets on which the French Pacific possessions depended. The second was complicated by the delicate nature of negotiations over the Leeward Islands and by the strength of British commercial and missionary interests in the New Hebrides. A subsidiary theme—the cooperation between French missions and the Navy—which had been a feature of policy in the late 1830's and 1840's, died out under the Third Republic. As a result, France had little or no pretext for protecting traders or missionaries in the Fiji Islands; and not even a French Consul was present to complicate British and German negotiations over Samoa. Commercially, France profited little, if the cost of administration and protection is kept in mind. Strategically, she had gained much.

⁴¹ *A. C. Océanie* 2. Galiber to Lefevre, December 8, 1887.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 1 bis. Vossion to Delcassé, September 23, 1900.