

AMBASSADE DE FRANCE A LONDRES

Service de Presse et d'Information

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New Hebrides

NOTE D'ACTUALITE

A. Alexander
Fascinating for show
Roman 19 June 1980
fall!
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CTL/DISCOM/133/80

NEW HEBRIDES

STATEMENT TO THE PRESS BY M. PAUL DIJOURD, SECRETARY OF
STATE FOR OVERSEAS DEPARTMENTS AND TERRITORIES
(17 JUNE 1980)

The New Hebrides are, perhaps, on the brink of irreparable events.

X | A few weeks away from independence, for which we have been meticulously preparing for several years, Great Britain thought it useful to send soldiers and military equipment into this country without our agreement and without it being necessary.

| France disapproves of this step. She considers that an internal political problem in the New Hebrides will not be solved by the intervention of European soldiers, unless Great Britain intends now to assume sole responsibility for public order in the New Hebrides.

| Walter Lini's Government bears a not inconsiderable responsibility in this situation. I ask him : will they be proud when several of their compatriots have been killed or wounded ? Do they not think that permanent wounds will then remain within their population ? Should they not, after what happened on Tanna, rather show a little understanding ? Do they want people to say throughout the Pacific that they used foreign soldiers to crush their brothers, when all forms of negotiation remained possible ?

| I am sure that the New Hebrides Government which we have unfailingly supported, and wish to continue to support, will understand the purpose of France's action and take every possible step to bring about genuine negotiations in which the fundamental problems can be dealt with : the unity of the New Hebrides and regionalization of Santo and Tanna, the sharing by all the political families in the exercise of responsibilities, the conditions for the necessary reconciliation.

| To the moderates, I address, once more, a solemn appeal. I understand their anxieties and their frustrations. I know they do not want the New Hebrides to go further towards breaking up and they know that the French Government is opposed to any secession.

| I ask them therefore with the greatest firmness to agree to the opening of genuine negotiations with the Government, in which, if necessary, Great Britain and France will be able to participate at the appropriate time.

.../.

There must be no more delay. It is no longer a time for preconditions and ultimatums. There must be a return to moderation and tolerance. It is to this task that France is unceasingly devoting herself : she wants, at all costs, to achieve reconciliation while there is still time.

To the British Government we have confirmed that we were ready, as it has asked us, to examine what needs to be done, now, to bring to the New Hebrides lasting peace and unity, that do not rest simply on the presence of foreign soldiers, but on the consensus of the New Hebrideans themselves.

These talks can begin immediately, as soon as genuine negotiations have begun in the New Hebrides, that is when we are assured that, in accordance with the Condominium's rules, nothing will be undertaken without our agreement or which might ruin the still remaining chances of achieving a peaceful solution.

France and Great Britain must resume their collaboration, refrain from any unilateral initiative of any kind whatsoever and prepare, once more, together, the accession of this country, for which they remain jointly responsible for several weeks more, to an independence that will not lead to new divisions and clashes./.