



# COUPS, CONFLICTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Pacific media challenges in  
the digital age

Pacific Journalism  
Monographs  
No.2  
16 October 2012

Professor David Robie  
AUT Inaugural Professorial  
Address

Bougainville Civil War 1989-1998 : David Robie

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Pacific Media Centre  
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# Coups, conflicts and human rights

## *Pacific media challenges in the digital age*

DAVID ROBIE

*AUT Public Lecture Series 2012*

*Inaugural Professorial Address*

### ABSTRACT

At the heart of a global crisis over news media credibility and trust is Britain's so-called Hackgate scandal involving the widespread allegations of phone-hacking and corruption against the now defunct Rupert Murdoch tabloid newspaper *News Of The World*. Major inquiries on media ethics, professionalism and accountability have been examining the state of the press in New Zealand, Britain and Australia. The Murdoch media empire has stretched into the South Pacific with the sale of one major title being forced by political pressure. The role of news media in global South nations and the declining credibility of some sectors of the developed world's Fourth Estate also pose challenges for the future of democracy. Truth, censorship, ethics and corporate integrity are increasingly critical media issues in the digital age for a region faced with coups, conflicts and human rights violations, such as in West Papua. In this address, Professor David Robie reflects on the challenges in the context of the political economy of the media and journalism education in the Asia-Pacific region. He also engages with emerging disciplines such as deliberative journalism, peace journalism, human rights journalism, and revisits notions of critical development journalism and citizen journalism.

**Keywords:** comparative journalism, critical development journalism, deliberative journalism, democracy, freedom of information, free press, marginalised media, media freedom, news models, news values

The five video clips included in the transcript of his address along with the full speech can be viewed at AUT University On Demand at:  
<http://tinyurl.com/8g7evyw>

ONCE I worked with a Kenyan chief editor, George Githii, who observed wryly about media freedom in developing nations: ‘For governments which fear newspapers, there is one consolation. We have known many instances where governments have taken over newspapers, but we haven’t known of a single incident in which a newspaper has taken over a government’ (Robie, 1995, p. 10). George, always dressed in a dapper bow tie, no matter what the emergency—such as a senior reporter being abducted before dawn by secret police because of a front page exposé on a pharmaceuticals corruption case—had impeccable credentials politically. He was former press secretary for President Jomo Kenyatta, founding ‘father’ of Kenya. His comment stuck with me for a long time, and at one stage I used the quote as an email rider. It seemed laughable the notion that newspapers might take over a government or two.

But these days the notion isn’t quite so absurd. Take Italy, for example. Italian media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi, controlling shareholder in the Mediaset empire and personally reputedly worth \$5.9 billion, is planning on making a bid to become Prime Minister of his country for a fourth time. Never mind the sex scandals that forced him to resign—along with the euro crisis—almost a year ago. Nor the fact that he failed to distance himself from his media dominance when in power previously; he simply shrugged off his election promises to sell off his assets in the country’s largest broadcaster to avoid a conflict of interest.

‘I have always behaved correctly, both in private and in public,’ he told the recently launched Italian edition of *The Huffington Post*. ‘I have never done anything against the law, nor against morality. All the rest is disinformation and defamation’ (Silvio Berlusconi, *Italian Advocate*, 29 September 2012). He is currently on trial over allegations of abuse of office and paying for sex with a teenager. [Berlusconi was subsequently convicted of tax fraud by a lower court in Milan on October 26 and sentenced to four years in prison reduced to one year under a law aimed at reducing overcrowding jails (Donadio, 2012).]

Berlusconi has just recently been on holiday to revitalise his political career—ironically, in Kenya.

But powerful as Berlusconi seems, and as dominating as his media empire may be in Italy, this is nothing compared to the News Corporation tentacles wrapped around political power in Australia, Britain and the US. Rupert Murdoch’s personal wealth may be marginally greater than Berlusconi’s at \$6 billion, according to Sydney media educator David McKnight in his recent book *Rupert*



Alan Moir in *Pacific Journalism Review*.

*Murdoch: An Investigation into Political Power*. But News Corporation itself is worth more than \$30 billion (McKnight, 2012, p. 2).

As McKnight says, ‘as well as being a money spinner, it is a crusading corporation, a media institution with a mission’. And in spite of the phone hacking scandal last year and the closure of the world’s largest newspaper, the red-topped tabloid *News of the World*, News Corp hasn’t really taken much of a beating in the share market—its share price has risen by about 50 percent in the past year, ‘thanks to a US\$10 billion share buy-back and its decision to split into two’ (Defiant Murdoch, 22 October 2012). ‘Today News Corporation is a powerful political presence in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States,’ writes McKnight (p. 3). ‘And while the power of Rupert Murdoch and News Corporation is expressed most clearly in its campaigning on major issues, such as the invasion of Iraq [in 2003] and the denial of global warming, it extends far wider.’

David McKnight’s book shows this to a devastating degree.

Last year, Murdoch’s newspaper *NOTW*, was shown to have systematically broken the law by ‘hacking phones on an industrial scale as well as bribing police. The resulting scandal led to a crisis within News Corp, which is not over yet’ (McKnight, p. 1). There have been more than 80 arrests so far. The above Alan Moir cartoon on the News Corp train crash is on the cover of the latest *Pacific Journalism Review*, along with an overview of the issues (Rebuilding public trust, 2012).

Britain's inquiry into media standards by Lord Justice Leveson, which is widely expected to recommend some form of statutory control on the media rather than the traditional self-regulatory regime, is due to be delivered in November (Leveson Inquiry, 2011). But already there are concerns by critics that the media has started soft-peddling on the issue.

'We have had an inquisition into every nook and cranny of newspaper culture, an audit greater than any press inquiry in the past and one that has genuinely opened the eyes of the public to the murkier machinations of the Fourth Estate,' wrote commentator Ian Burrell in *The Independent* (Burrell, 2012). 'And yet, just as the judge prepares to present his hotly anticipated findings, things have gone strangely quiet. Even the recent court appearance of Rebekah Brooks [a former editor of *NOTW*] and Andy Coulson [a former editor of the *NOTW*], who denied phone-hacking charges, attracted less attention in the written media than their former colleagues at News International had been expecting.'

The controversy is aptly summarised in this recent PBS *Frontline* report (Murdoch's scandal, 2012) that investigates into the struggle over the future of News Corporation.

[PRESENTER, voice-over] *Tonight on Frontline, Rupert Murdoch and his son engulfed in scandal. How did the owner of the Fox network, Fox news channel, the movie studio, The Wall Street Journal, and a worldwide media empire come to be hounded by the press and haunted by the death of a teenager.*

FEMALE VOICE: That's what absolutely turned the whole thing in a complete nightmare for Rupert Murdoch.

Labour MP TOM WATSON [Chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee]: Mr Murdoch, at what point did you find out that criminality was endemic at *News Of The World*.

MURDOCH: Endemic is a very hard, very wide-ranging word.

[Voice-over]: *Tonight, Frontline correspondent Lowell Bergman goes inside the phone-hacking scandal ...*

LABOUR MP CHRIS BRYANT: They hacked my phone and they ran some pretty hideous stories about my sexuality.

ANDREW NEIL, FORMER LONDON *SUNDAYTIMES* EDITOR [and thus a former Murdoch employee]: They hacked my messages between myself and the chief executive.

[Voice-over]: ... that rocked a government ...

NICK DAVIES [The journalist on *The Guardian* who exposed the scandal]: This is becoming a very, very big scandal, the biggest news organisation in the country is in trouble, the biggest police force in the country is in trouble and furthermore, the Prime Minister's right hand man is in trouble.

[Voice-over] ... and shook the media ...

MURDOCH: This is the most humble day of my life.

ANDREW NEIL: There is a Shakespearean tragedy in that what has happened, what has created him now looks like it can destroy him.

The latest edition of *Pacific Journalism Review*, of which I am the founding editor, features the Murdoch phone-hacking scandal. The journal started at the University of Papua New Guinea 18 years ago. We have devoted the October issue to the tumultuous events in journalism in the past year, including the Leveson Inquiry, and in Australia the Finkelstein and Convergence inquiries, and also the New Zealand Law Commission discussion paper around a possible super media regulator.

Increasingly, the newspaper industry in Western countries is failing and the hunt is on for the elusive 'new business model'. But we also raised the question in the editorial: 'Are media proprietors paying enough attention to the fact that the business model is built on the public trusting the journalistic practices that sit at the heart of the media brands. Retaining public trust in journalism and to rebuild lost trust becomes as important as the quest to make online journalism pay' (Trust and transparency, 2012).



*Pacific Journalism Review*, October 2012.



And this introduction brings me to the Pacific connection in this saga of media ‘trust and transparency’. More than a decade before the closure of the *News Of The World*, another Murdoch newspaper, *The Fiji Times*, owned by the Australian-based subsidiary, News Limited, was embroiled in a major controversy. That time it was over its reportage of the May 2000 coup led by maverick businessman George Speight—now in prison for life for treason along with his media minder—and renegade counter-revolutionary gunmen. Ten years later News Limited was forced to sell the title by a post-coup draconian *Media Decree*.



**The sale of the Murdoch-owned *Fiji Times*, September 2010.**

As both a journalism educator and a researcher, my students and I were involved at the heart of this crisis (Robie, 2001). Just as I have been a journalist covering stories such as independence for indigenous minorities in Kanaky/

New Caledonia, where I reported on the mid-1980s conflict, and the struggles in East Timor and West Papua.

The nature of my journalism career, for many years working in developing countries and for two global news agencies, has shaped and influenced my journalism, my teaching and my research trajectory. Social justice and ethical frameworks have provided the foundation. And also a commitment to media freedom.

ITEM 1: *Shouts by French CRS riot police as they attack peaceful Kanak protesters holding balloons and sitting in the Place des Cocotiers in central Noumea, New Caledonia ... Sounds of truncheons crashing on sitting protesters.*

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ITEM 2: *Shouts as Papua New Guinea police fire teargas canisters into protesting students at the national University of Papua New Guinea and also assault a journalist...*

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NEWS READER: The situation at Waigani as the University of Papua New Guinea students protest against the user pays policy [*Scenes of brutality by police and firing of teargas into students; a journalist is attacked*].

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PNG FORESTS MINISTER TIM NEVILLE [in a studio radio interview]: He was approached by four Malaysians and they said, ‘You’re Greg Neville,

the brother of the Minister of Forests, Tim Neville.’ And he said, ‘That’s correct, what’s it to you?’

And their remark, warning or threat to him was that, ‘You had better warn your brother, the minister, he had better back off on the forest policy issues, or you and your family are as good as dead.’

NARRATOR DAVID ROBIE [with *Fri Pres* title and media freedom cartoon frames as background]: *Across the South Pacific today, the news media are under siege as never before. In some countries, journalists face brutal assaults, arbitrary imprisonment, gaggings, threats, defamation cases, with the threat of bankruptcy and vilification.*

*And they also face mounting pressure from governments to be ‘accountable’ and to ‘report the truth’. But whose truth and accountability to whom?*

*As Pacific journalists and news media become more professional and probing on the dilemmas of development, economic and social policy and issues such as corruption, there is a danger that some politicians want to restrict the media from reporting in the public interest.*

This half hour documentary was actually compiled by me with two University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) students, Stephenson Liu of Vanuatu and Priscilla Raepom of PNG, in 1996. The extraordinary thing is that the freedom of the press situation has remained much the same in the Pacific for almost two decades, only the specific flashpoints change (*Fri Pres*, 1996).

The rest of this lecture is structured into five sections as I take you on a journey with my waka through life. On the way, I will introduce you to some interesting ideas and some of the people who have influenced my journalism, research and publication directions: 1. My early reflections with some brief childhood influences; 2. my journalism career; 3. my move into media education almost two decades ago in PNG for five years and then in Fiji for a further five years; the establishment of the Pacific Media Centre at AUT, and changing paradigms and future challenges

## **1. Early Reflections**

A picture of me shown in the presentation as a four-year-old was the earliest evidence of my French connection—ie. a black beret. But there was no baguette in sight in deepest Ngaio, Wellington, at the time.

In any case, my father, Jim Robie, says he doesn’t think there was any special



James Robie, editor of the *Caledonian Mercury*, c. 1866.

reason for the headgear, except that post-war Monty-style berets were popular at the time.

I wasn't really fully aware of the significance as I was growing up, but apart from my Dad, who always had fortnightly bundles of fascinating library books from flamenco music to Robert Ruark's *Africa*, and my Aunt Ruby, a librarian in Petone, I had a critically important person among my whaka-papa. My great great Grandfather, James Robie, was the editor and later owner of Scotland's *Caledonian Mercury* in Edinburgh in the 1860s. He was something of a media stirrer and pamphleteer who campaigned for the Free Kirk Radicals.

James Robie was awarded a testimonial for his newspaper's 'able advocacy of such august subjects as the Amity of Nations, the Rights of Christian Churches, Anti-Slavery, Free Trade, Just Taxation and Social Reforms—and civil liberty'. He and his wife Letitia were also presented with a set of volumes of *The Rebellion Record*, a classic hidebound history and diary of the American Civil War. Queen Victoria was also among the 40 people presented with a set.

There were other influences for me as well, such as drawing inspiration from the life of Joan of Arc—portrayed by her statue outside St Joseph's Cathedral in Noumea, New Caledonia. In my view, this is more imposing than the national monument to St Jeanne in the Rue de Rivoli, Paris.

Another early influence worth mentioning was when I was chosen in 1963 as a Queen's Scout for a New Zealand contingent at the 11<sup>th</sup> World Jamboree at Marathon Bay in Greece. This was the site of the famous battleground in 490BC when a hopelessly outnumbered Athenian force defeated a huge Persian invasion army by a cunning strategy. The jamboree was billed as the second battle of Marathon—peaceful, of course, and photos show our marae-style campsite and participants practising tikanga Māori. **We also met with Crown Prince Constantine** before he was overthrown by the colonels in a bloodless coup four years later.

Colonel Georgios Papadopoulos led a military overthrow of the government on 21 April 1967. (The repressive junta lasted until 1974, but the ‘colonels’ never produced evidence to support their claim that they were acting to prevent a Communist-inspired coup. The Costa-Gravis film *Z* (from the Greek word *zei* for ‘he lives’) about the assassination of pacifist leader Gregoris Lambrakis is one of the most politically insightful films ever made, exposing government hypocrisy and cover-up leading up to the putsch. This film was a powerful influence on me too. (Last year, a re-enactment of the original battle was staged at Marathon. I was 17 at the time of the Marathon trip, and later visited Paris where I vowed to return and live.)

## **2. Journalism career**

In this section, I have introduced a smorgasbord of some of the journalism jobs I have had. After working for the *Dominion*, *NZ Herald* and the *Melbourne Herald*, I was appointed chief subeditor in 1969 of a major campaigning newspaper in Melbourne, the *Sunday Observer* owned by Gordon Barton, a millionaire transport mogul who owned IPEC and was convenor of the Australia Party. I later became editor the following year.

The *Sunday Observer* was the first newspaper with a reasonably large circulation (more than 100,000) to campaign vigorously against Australia involvement in the Vietnam War. One of the challenges I had at the time while chief sub was to publish the Ronald L. Haerberle photographs of the My Lai massacre in 1968. Between some 340 and 500 unarmed civilians were murdered in March 16 that year by US Army soldiers of ‘Charlie’ company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment (‘Something dark and bloody’, 1969).

Most of the victims were elderly people, women and children. Twenty two soldiers were charged over the atrocities, but only one, Second Lieutenant William Calley, was actually convicted. He was jailed for life for the murder of 22 civilians but only served a three-year house arrest term.

Investigative journalist Seymour Hersh broke the story with revelations that Lieutenant Calley was being prosecuted for a war crime. My *Sunday Observer* newspaper published the Haerberle photographs on 14 December 1969—the same week as *Life Magazine* in New York. We later made the photographs available to the Federal Parliament in a bid to influence opposition to the war.

At the time when we published the pictures, the Pentagon was still claiming the killings were an ‘act of war’. But our report said:

**Sunday Observer**

MELBOURNE, DECEMBER 14, 1969

FIRST COLOR PICTURES

# BLOODBATH IN VIETNAM



*Sunday Observer*, Melbourne, 14 December 1969.

The pictures in this newspaper by Ronald Haerberle, an Army photographer who covered the massacre, and reports in the past three weeks confirm a story of indisputable horror—the deliberate slaughter of old men, women, children and babies.

Eyewitness reports indicate that the American troops encountered little—if any—hostile fire, found virtually no enemy soldiers in the village and suffered only one casualty—a self-inflicted wound. The people of My Lai were simply gunned down. ('Something dark and bloody', 1969)

During my time with the *Sunday Observer*, I personally met and worked with Wilfred Burchett, an Australian who was one of the most courageous journalists I have ever encountered, but who was loathed by many Australians who regarded him as Public Enemy Number One because they believed he was a traitor who covered the Korean and Vietnam wars from the 'other side' (Robie, 2009, p. 221).

At the time, Wilfred was barred from entering his own country by a vindictive government in Canberra because he had lost his Australian passport, allegedly stolen by the CIA. He was the *Sunday Observer's* South-East Asian Correspondent at the time and we chartered a plane to fly him into Brisbane from Noumea. Once he was safely on Australian soil he was then able to regain his passport (He's home, 1 March 1970).

Wilfred Burchett was pictured while in Auckland by Ngapuhi photojournalist John Miller. Wilfred's international reputation as a journalist and war correspondent—as outlined in *Rebel Journalism* and many of his other books—was built upon one of the great reportage scoops of the 20th century (Burchett & Shimmin, 2007). After the second atomic bomb was dropped in Nagasaki in Japan in August 1945 and the Japanese had announced their surrender, the American forces issued accreditation to several hundred correspondents to report on the signing of the surrender documents.

All the accredited journalists dutifully made their way to the USS *Missouri*, but Wilfred 'slipped the leash' and on the morning of 2 September 1945 boarded a train for Hiroshima (Burchett & Shimmin, 2007, p. 1). Wilfred travelled for more than 600km, carrying rations for just seven meals—food was almost impossible to obtain at the time in Japan—a black umbrella and a typewriter.

What Wilfred Burchett saw was the total devastation of Hiroshima; a city of some 100,000 people had simply been pulverised. Wilfred's front page lead in the 5 September 1945 edition of the London *Daily Express* declared: THE ATOMIC PLAGUE: 'I write this as a warning to the world' and was subtitled: 'Doctors fall as they work. Poison gas fear: All wear masks.' Wilfred wrote:



Wilfred Burchett returns to Australia, *Sunday Observer*, 1 March 1970.

In Hiroshima, 30 days after the first atomic bomb destroyed the city and shook the world, people are still dying, mysteriously and horribly—people who were uninjured by the cataclysm—from, an unknown something which I can only describe as ‘atomic plague’. (Burchett & Shimmin, 2007, pp. 2-5)

As I recalled in 2009, ‘almost four decades later, in his final book, *Shadows of Hiroshima*, [Burchett] returned to this nuclear nightmare and reflected on this racist experiment against an already defeated enemy and a history of cover-ups over the “atomic plague”’ (Robie, 2009a, pp. 220-223). Within the first two to four months of the bombing, up to 166,000 people died in Hiroshima, with about half that number dying in the first day. A further 80,000 plus died in Nagasaki.

And this was never considered a war crime.

Probably the most outstanding newspaper that I ever worked on was the *Rand Daily Mail*, South Africa’s largest English-language newspaper, published in Johannesburg. I was chief subeditor (1970-72) during that newspaper’s fight against apartheid, and later night editor. I was astonished by the number of my colleagues who had been jailed for reporting “banned” people or refusing to divulge sources. I worked under great editors such as Raymond Louw, Allister Sparks, and Benjamin Pogrand and I learnt a lot about human rights and crusading journalism.

For much of its 83-year history, the *Mail* blazed a trail for independence and a free press. The last editor was Rex Gibson and his book *Final Deadline* has been dubbed ‘a tale of corporate manipulation, mismanagement and hypocrisy’ (Gibson, 2007). In the end, a proud newspaper died in 1985 but nobody could really explain why. In a speech marking the 20th anniversary of the paper’s closure, Ray Louw said: ‘The closure caused huge damage [throughout South Africa]; it seared the country’s news gathering and distribution system, from which the industry has still not recovered’ (Louw, 2005).

Among many brave people who were my colleagues on the *Mail* was a ‘banned’ photographer, Peter Magubane, whom I was forced to meet in secret in Soweto. Years later, the New York-published book *Magubane’s South Africa* documented those ugly years of repression (Magubane, 1978). Then US Ambassador to the United Nations, Andrew Young, wrote in the foreword: ‘Who would ever believe that a man’s quest for excellence as a photojournalist would bring him 586 days of solitary confinement in prison, six months or more in jail, physical brutality and five years “banning”? (p. vii)’ Under South Africa’s apartheid laws at the

time, the regime could arbitrarily ban people, movements and publications. This meant that if they were banned under the *Riotous Assemblies Act 1929* or later the *Suppression of Communism Act 1950*, it was illegal for news media to quote or publish what they said. There was no appeal against a banning order (Boddy-Evans, n.d.).

Peter's notes about the cover picture taken at a football match said: 'A policeman with a dog is a fearful thing. One of those dogs will rip you open. ... The whip is made of hippo hide' (p. 52).

From South Africa, I embarked in 1973 on what was supposed to be a 13,000 km overland journey from Cape Town to Cairo in a VW Kombi. It ended up being a year-long 20,000 km journey in two stages from Cape Town to Paris, filing freelance stories on the way for independent news services such Gemini. One of my memorable assignments was reporting on and driving along the Trans-African Highway from Mombasa to Lagos.

The big problem was that most of this road didn't actually exist. This road-to-nowhere tale became a cover story for *African Development* magazine, one of the top current affairs publications of the time (Robie, 1973).

This Trans-African safari across 25 countries began in South Africa after six months of spare time planning and fitting out of the vehicle. Among our stores we had enough jerrycans to carry 190 litres of petrol and 40 litres of water, two spare wheels and three extra tyres, a special high-lift jack for hoisting the van out of holes, an aluminium ladder, a medical kits, spades, sand mats, a range of spare parts, three months supply of canned and dehydrated food—and the lower jawbone of an elephant! (Robie, 1973)

In between the two stages, I was features editor of the *Daily Nation* in Kenya, the newspaper that I mentioned at the start of my lecture, edited by George Githii. This newspaper was owned by the Aga Khan and was founded as



Peter Magubane's South Africa, 1978.





SA Sunday Express, 13 July 1975.

signwriting to read “Taboo” (Robie, 1973). These were still euphoric times for the fledgling nation of Algeria, having just won its independence from France a decade earlier after a devastating eight-year war. The 1966 film by Gillo Pontecorvo *The Battle of Algiers* is a classic on urban guerrilla warfare based in the *casbah* (Pontecorvo, 1996).

I parked the Kombi outside the American Express Building after camping in the Bois de Boulogne, sold it for cash—and got a job on Agence France-Presse news agency where I worked for the next three years.

While working as a foreign correspondent and news editor for AFP, I covered such events as the black African walkout in protest against New Zealand over its sporting ties with South Africa at the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal, Canada. I also covered stories like the hunt for ‘Carlos the Jackal’, then one of the global masterminds of terror, such as the above article for the South African *Sunday Express*.

Ironically, this was also where I started to develop an interest in Pacific affairs, through French policy in the region over nuclear testing and its colonies,

the newspaper of independence. It contested the British colonial *East African Standard* and it ended up owning that paper too. My ultimate boss was Prince Karim Aga Khan IV, the Imam of the Nizari Ismaili community, a Shia Muslim sect. The Aga Khan founded the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), a vast private company seeking to raise living standards and boost education across many Asian and African countries.

Finally, I ended up in Paris in 1975, driving the Kombi pictured earlier, after crossing the Sahara desert and traversing Algeria. To give the blue van a human touch it was painted with a dynamic African route map and ‘christened’ Tuhoe, after the iwi of the Urewera country, but most people mistook the

French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna—and also Vanuatu, which was still to become independent.

Until then, my interests had been focused on Africa.

Just across the Place de la Bourse from AFP is the headquarters of the Reporters Sans Frontières global media freedom group. I have been a researcher and analyst for RSF on Pacific media freedom issues for more than two decades. And the Pacific Media Watch research project, which I founded with investigative journalist Peter Cronau of the ABC *Four Corners* in 1996, is currently being edited by Alex Perrottet at AUT. The project has close ties with RSF.

I travelled back to New Zealand from France in 1977 to join the *Auckland Star*, also a crusading newspaper, and became foreign editor.

Often conflicts or struggles in one part of the Pacific are hardly known about, or barely understood, in another. Feudalism, militarism, corruption and personality cults isolate people from national—and regional—decision-making. Political independence has not necessarily rid the Pacific of the problems it faces, and, in many cases, our own Pacific political leaders are part of the problem.

The Nuclear-Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) movement was spawned as a ‘voice for the people’ with headquarters in Fiji and the People’s Charter for NFIP was adopted at the 1983 regional conference in Port Vila, Vanuatu: ‘We, the people of the Pacific have been victimised too long by foreign powers,’ stated the charter and it declared strong opposition to nuclear weapons and arsenals in the region.

While the New Zealand media has long strongly highlighted the country’s role championing a nuclear-free Pacific, it has been less generous about the efforts of Pacific Island leaders and countries.

People like the inspirational late Walter Lini, then Prime Minister of Vanuatu, for example. His small country was the first to declare itself nuclear-free and ban visits by nuclear-armed warships. Walter wrote the foreword to my book, *Eyes of Fire* (Robie, 1986), and he is portrayed in the presentation lecture images being interviewed for the Alister Barry film, *Nuklia Fri Pasifik*.

(With the title taken from the Vanuatu pidgin language, Bislama), the 47-minute film tells the inside story of the birth and growth of the NFIP movement from the first Suva conference in 1975 until the political negotiations that a decade later brought about the flawed Rarotonga Treaty, ‘banning’ nuclear tests in the region. (Robie, *NZ Listener*, 27 May 1989).



'Guns and money' profile in the *NZ Listener*, 5 August 2000.

bombs in the South Pacific, 46 of them dumping more than nine megatons of explosive energy in the atmosphere.

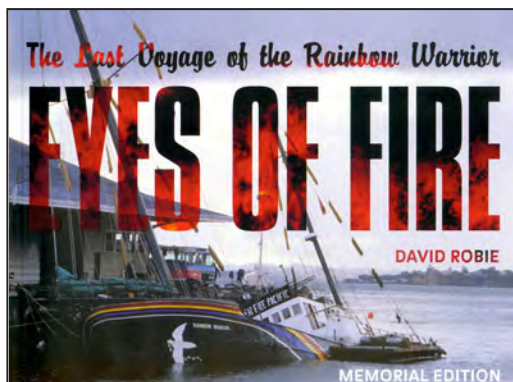
My reporting was wide-ranging in the Asia-Pacific region, from investigating a controversial New Zealand forestry aid project in Lumad indigenous land in Bukidnon province on the southern Philippines island of Mindanao—which involved issues similar to Māori land rights (Robie, *NZ Listener*, 22 April 1989) ... to the shadowy rebel military clique in the fragile democracy of the Philippines known as 'The Ramboys' who were determined to oust President Cory Aquino in a coup (Robie, *Sunday*, 20 May 1990) ... to the Bougainville Civil War, which I covered for the first two years and wrote a cover story for *Pacific Islands Monthly* about it (Robie, *Pacific Islands Monthly*, November 1989).

Not widely known was the role of a New Zealand consultancy which was accused of whitewashing Bougainville Copper's pollution of the Jaba River near Panguna Mine and thus triggering off the insurrection (Robie, *Sunday*, 10 December 1989).

The Santa Cruz massacre on 12 December 1991 in the East Timor capital

The 1977 book *Moruroa, Mon Amour*, Marie-Thérèse and Bengt Danielsson's damning indictment of French nuclear colonisation, was republished in 1986 as *Poisoned Reign* (Danielsson, 1986). French stubbornness over nuclear testing and demands for independence in Tahiti were then at a peak. It seemed unlikely that in fewer than two decades, nuclear testing would be finally abandoned in the South Pacific—and Tahiti's leading nuclear-free and pro-independence politician, Oscar Temaru, would emerge as the territory's new president. He ushered in a refreshing and inspirational 'new order' with a commitment to pan-Pacific relations. By the time Oscar came to power and nuclear testing had ended, France





*Eyes of Fire* [Memorial edition], 2005.

Human Rights Committee (IHRC), who have campaigned for the Philippines, East Timor and West Papua causes and also for the nuclear-free and peace movements. Both Maire and Keith were leaders of the Philippine Solidarity Network during the Marcos martial law years. Maire is currently writing a book about the Peace Movement in Aotearoa.

In April 1985, I joined Greenpeace's *Rainbow Warrior* in Hawai'i as a journalist to travel to the Marshall Islands on the humanitarian voyage to relocate Rongelap Islanders to a new home atoll because of the horrendous legacy of the US nuclear tests in the Pacific. With a huge hydrogen test in March 1954 code-named Castle Bravo, 64 Rongelap people were contaminated, as were another 18 Rongelapese on nearby Ailingnae atoll, where they were cutting copra and catching fish. The death of Leko Anjain at the age of 18 was the first radiation-linked death.

During the *Rainbow Warrior* evacuation from Rongelap in May 1985, four voyages were made to move the entire community—almost 400 people—to Mejato, Kwajalein. The United States did attempt to make amends for the tests. It provided some \$150 million as part of the so-called Compact of Free Association to establish a nuclear claims tribunal.

Aucklanders welcomed the *Rainbow Warrior* in July 1985. Pictured in the presentation is a John Miller photograph of the Vanuatu government's representative Charles Rara (in a suit), who sailed on board from Port Vila and later died tragically at a young age, and also Dutch-Portuguese photojournalist Fernando Pereira.

After I was on board the *Rainbow Warrior* for almost 11 weeks, it was bombed by French secret agents in Operation Satanic in Auckland harbour on 10 July 1985 to prevent the Greenpeace ship carrying on to Moruroa Atoll to lead a flotilla protesting against nuclear testing. 'Blunderwatergate', as it was known, was a public relations disaster for the French in the Pacific—as we all know. In contrast to the so-called War on Terror of today and the Coalition of the

Willing, the British, Australian and US governments were meekly silent about the French state terrorist outrage. Pictured is the cover of the memorial edition of my 1986 book *Eyes of Fire*, with a photograph taken by John Miller. (Robie, 2005a)

My old cabin was adjacent to Fernando who lost his life in the bombing. He had scrambled to safety on Marsden Wharf after the first bomb exploded, but went back on board to rescue his cameras. He drowned after the second bomb detonated 10 minutes later.

Shown is my only personal memento from the bombed ship—my old British passport. (This was the bombed one, not my New Zealand passport). When I left the *Warrior* after we arrived in Auckland three days before the bombing, I had forgotten to collect my passport from the locked up captain's safe on the bridge. It sank with the ship and I recovered it later from Devonport Naval Base.

Even in 'death', the *Warrior* unleashed powerful emotions and creativity. Schoolchildren painted pictures of the stricken ship, donations poured in the hope of patching her up, fund-raising concerts were organised and exhibitions put on show.

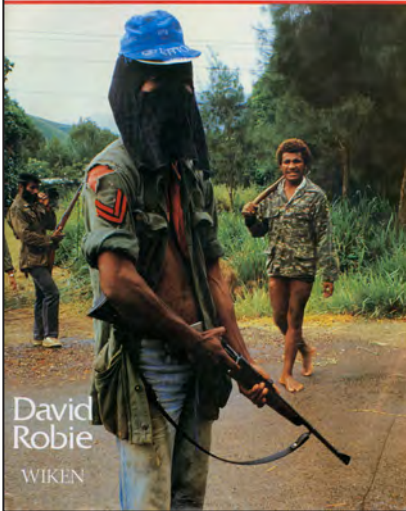
Now to *les événements* in Kanaky/New Caledonia. In the 1980s, the French-ruled territory was on the brink of civil war. This was because of the indigenous Kanak people asserting their rights as the colonised people after more than a century of rule from Paris. Barricades were set up through the territory and the Kanak people rose up in civil disobedience against French control. Pictured is a young girl during a Kanak occupation of the Place des Cocotiers in the heart of Noumea.

French Pacific regiment troops are shown on parade outside the Territorial Assembly—or Parliament—in Noumea. More French troops ... And again ... In contrast, a Kanak barricade in support of independence.

Kanak independence leader Eloi Machoro inspired protests against the French elections. He is pictured carrying an axe across his shoulders that he would later use to chop open a ballot box in Canala and burn the voting papers in a symbolic gesture against French rule in 1984. He and a lieutenant, Marcel Nonaro, were eventually assassinated by French CIGN police snipers on 12 January 1985 at a farmhouse siege at Dogny, near the western village of La Foa. The official version claimed it was an 'accident' (cited in Robie, 1989, p. 121).

I reported many cover stories for international news magazines and special reports for newspapers during this era. A masked Kanak militant is pictured near Thio in New Caledonia. The same masked man is shown on the cover of the

## POCH VÄRLDEN BLUNDAR...



***Blood on their Banner* [Swedish edition], 1989.**

Swedish edition of my 1989 book *Blood on their Banner*, which was published with the title of *Och Världen Blundar ... (And the World Closed its Eyes ...)* and with a foreword by the Danielssons.

I had planned to present a short clip from the French feature film *Rebellion* about the Ouvéa island cave massacre in 1988. This is a chilling docu-drama that was screened at the New Zealand International Film Festival in Auckland in July but is not due to go on general release in New Zealand until February. Instead, I showed an Al Jazeera report a couple of years ago looking briefly at what has happened since *les évènements* in New Caledonia back in 1986.

New Caledonia is still on the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation—or the Committee of 24—as it is known. This is the same committee that oversaw independence in East Timor. The decolonisation process is enshrined in the Noumea Accord, signed in 1998 between pro-independence Kanak parties and the pro-French rule parties. It provides guidelines for a gradual transfer of power from Paris to local authorities, a power-sharing government and an eventual referendum on self-determination between 2014 and 2018. A short Al Jazeera clip brings us up to date (New Caledonia awaits decolonisation, 17 May 2010):

Al Jazeera reporter HARRY FAWCETT [sizzling barbecue]: *Sunday lunch is a bigger affair than usual for this tribe. It is their turn in this part of eastern New Caledonia to host a tourist weekend—a chance to show French visitors the Kanak way of life and to make a bit of extra money.*

*A strikingly different scene from 26 years ago [1984] when they used the same land to hide Kanak fighters involved in pro-independence violence. August Changniroua still has the rifle he carried, but he says they were to fire when he manned the roadblocks to keep out the French.*

AUGUST CHANGIROUA [Tribal leader]: The Kanak people decided to fight. We had been exploited for too long. We wanted to get our land back. We decided to occupy our land and force the French to talk about independence. And that's what started the events of 1984.



**A two-flags poster for the French-language version of the film *Rebellion*, 2011.**

FAWCETT [Voice-over]: *Referred to obliquely as les évènements—the events. The independence uprising lasted on and off for four years and cost at least 60 lives. Today, after more than two decades of political, economic and social reform, the capital Noumea bears little trace of those dark days.*

[On camera, beside the Noumea marina] *The foundation of all this is the 1998 Noumea Accord, which mandates the gradual, but crucially, irreversible transfer of powers to the locally elected government in the run-up to 2014. In the five years after that, there has to be a referendum on whether to leave so-called sovereign powers in the hands of the French or to opt for full independence. The country's 'loyalist' President says that in a globalised world the idea of full independence for a tiny group of Pacific islands doesn't make sense.*

PRESIDENT PHILIPPE GOMES: New Caledonia should become a small nation with the big nation of France. For that to happen there would need to be two things: On the political side we need a shared sovereignty agreement with France, an association if you will; then you have the financial component, which is a very important one.

FAWCETT [Voice-over]: *Indeed, money matters in the question of independence. French aid to New Caledonia amounts to US\$1.5 billion a year, which is at least 15 percent of GDP. There is the influence too of New Caledonia's biggest industry. The main island, La Grand Terre, contains 25 percent of the world's reserves of nickel. As a greater stake in the regulation and profits is ceded to the local administration, even those who once advocated severing ties with France now adopt a more pragmatic tone.*

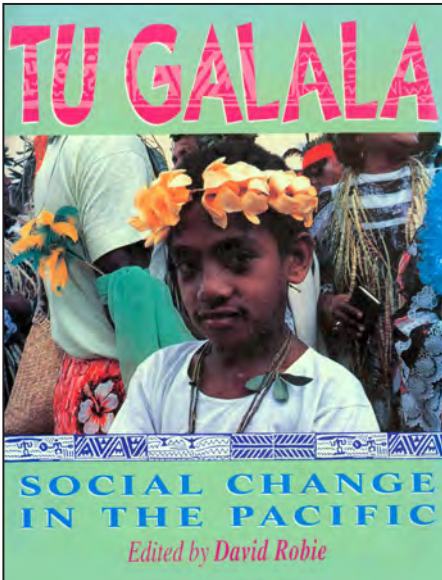
CHARLES PIDJOT [Leader of the Caledonian Union, one of the pro-independence parties]: There are different challenges than just political



power. It's the control of resources. We told the French government we are ready to engage in all kinds of discussions. We don't want to be shut down in a sterile debate about laws.

FAWCETT [Voice-over with impoverished Kanak homes in the background]: *New Caledonia's stark inequalities remain and with them support for parties an immediate and complete break with France. But for now, they are in a minority.*

Noumea's night market showcases the kind of multicultural future those in the political ascendancy promote. New Caledonia already has a unique status, officially designated as an overseas 'country' [territory] of France. Whether you call that kind of arrangement a compromise or a contradiction, it looks set to continue for some time to come.



*Tu Galala: Social change in the Pacific, 1992.*

Territorial President Philip Gomes, interviewed in the news clip, is no longer in that role. But the situation remains the same and what he was talking about was a sort of Cook Islands and New Zealand relationship worked out with France, not full independence.

In Fiji in May 1987, Lieutenant-Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka launched his country's contemporary "coup culture" by staging a putsch against the elected government of Fiji Labour Party Prime Minister Dr Timoci Bavadra. I covered this for regional media, including the *New Zealand Times*, the national *Times On Sunday* in Australia, and *New Outlook* magazine among others. One of the special series of articles that I wrote

analysed the so-called Taukei Movement and some of the key people who had engineered and supported the coups.

These dramatic events and changes in the Pacific were recorded in my 1992 book *Tu Galala: Social Change in the Pacific*, ironically funded by the *Rainbow Warrior* compensation fund. As I wrote at the time, the Pacific was in upheaval—

and still is—environmental catastrophe, conflicts over development, communal unrest, growing militarisation, the impact of poverty, colonialism, neo-colonialism and liberation struggles’ (Robie, 1992, p. 9). Many of the contributors to this book were activists and leaders writing about their struggles.

### 3. Media education

In early 1993, I was recruited by the University of Papua New Guinea to head the journalism programme founded by the late New Zealand television journalist Ross Stevens. A key influence here for me was New Zealand political studies researcher Alan Robson from the Australian National University. He is currently at UPNG in a bid to revive the politics and journalism programmes.

In a country with seven million people, at least 841 distinct languages and cultures, and three national media languages—Tok Pisin, Hiri Motu and English—the national university probably providing me with the sternest challenges I have ever had as a journalism educator. All the dilemmas of the nation’s political and development issues were right there on the university campus, and many of the nation’s intellectuals and most gifted commentators and activists were also there. Reporting the truth depended on cultural biases and conditioning. The most dangerous delusion of all is that there is only one reality.

In one land reform story for *The Press*—I filed occasional media reports when I had spare time—the issue was highly sensitive. Politicians were arguing for land registration to alienate more indigenous land for development. A common student response was to seize a government car with state licence plates, drive them onto the campus and set them on fire—as shown in my photograph (Robie, *The Press*, 22 August 1995).

Crime was also rife on campus. Murders of staff or students were not uncommon



Front page Uni Taur report on a campus bank raid, 16 May 1997.

## Nius Bilong Pasifik



### MASS MEDIA IN THE PACIFIC

*Edited by David Robie*

*Nius Bilong Pasifik, Port Moresby, 1995.*

mon and on one occasion off-duty and drunk police officers attacked our *Uni Tavour* newspaper van. Among the students in the newspaper team were Serah, daughter of the then Chief Justice, Sir Arnold Amet. A front page story carrying a picture of our bloodied driver and the number plate of the attackers never led to an arrest (Rascals attack on *Uni Tavour* editors, *Uni Tavour*, 18 August 1995). On another occasion, we were shot at. Pictures editor Serah later told me, ‘Dad said, “What the hell is your lecturer doing allowing you to be on dangerous missions”.’ The point was this was real world journalism being reported in real time by the students.

Bank robberies also happened on campus and on occasions when protests were being staged by students over an issue, tear gas canisters were fired and injured students were treated in the university clinic (Shot guard recovers from bank raid, *Uni Tavour*, 16 May 1997). The UPNG journalism newspaper, *Uni Tavour*, was the first publication from New Zealand or the Pacific to win the top newspaper publishing Ossie Award in the annual Journalism Education Association of Australia (JEAA) prizegiving. It won this in 1996 for a series of investigative journalism reports (*Uni Tavour* takes out top award, *Post-Courier*, 3 May 1996).

Among stories covered by the students was the Sandline mercenary crisis when PNG military commander Jerry Singirok rounded up mercenaries hired by the Sir Julius Chan government and arrested them at dawn in Operation Rausim Kwik. Singirok’s actions were seen as a virtual coup, but he was not after power himself—just seeking to rid the country of illegal foreign mercenaries before they went to war on Bougainville. The Pacific would never have been the same if the mercenaries had actually gone into action. The Chan government was ousted from power (Students join wave of protest over Chan, *Uni Tavour*, 21 March 1997).

In 1995, I edited a book collection of perspectives on Papua New Guinea

and Pacific journalism and education entitled *Nius Blong Pasifik: Mass Media in the Pacific*, the first book of its kind in the region (Robie, 1995).

In Fiji, when I took up the post as head of journalism at the University of the South Pacific in 1998, I also faced the challenges of students covering high profile stories in a similar manner as in PNG, such as the George Speight attempted coup in May 2000. The interface between practice and the politics has also resulted in critical journalism research case studies. Refugee militant leaders from the ‘ethnic cleansing’ conflict in the Solomon Islands took refuge at USP and buried the hatchet there. They told their stories to the journalism programme newspaper *Wansolwara*, founded by Philip Cass, a Papua New Guinean-born Australian, in 1996. (‘Give up the gun’ plea to comrades, *Wansolwara*, June 2002).

The hostage drama in Fiji’s Parliament when George Speight’s henchmen held the Mahendra Chaudhry government at gunpoint for 56 days had a spillover effect on the USP journalism programme. The USP students covered what was called the ‘internet coup’ for their website *Pacific Journalism Online* and newspaper *Wansolwara*. But when martial law was declared by the military for 48 hours at the end of May, the university authorities took advantage of the shutdown and closed the journalism website. They also tried, but unsuccessfully, to block publishing of the newspaper *Wansolwara*.

The Australian Centre for Independent Journalism at the University of Technology, Sydney, opened a special website for the USP students and they carried on filing as normal. Their exploits came to the notice of the International Press Institute’s *Global Journalist*, which published a profile on them and the USP students won seven student news prizes at the annual Ossie Awards in Australia (Ransom, 2000). They scooped the pool.

The Speight coup has proved fertile research for media academics too, with at least five research theses being produced out of three countries.



The coup edition of *Wansolwara*, June 2000.

The screenshot shows the Pacific Media Centre website interface. At the top, the logo 'PACIFIC MEDIA CENTRE TE AMOKURA' is displayed. Below it is a navigation menu with various categories and a search bar. The main content area is organized into several sections: a 'HEADLINES' section featuring a large image of a man in a hat and a red star, a 'Hot Topic' section with a photo of a man in a floral lei, and an 'Events' section with a poster for 'Dreadlocks Islands and Skies edition book launch'. There are also social media links for YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook, and a 'Log out' button. A sidebar on the right contains sections for 'Pacific.Scoop', 'café pacific', and 'Events'.

**Pacific Media Centre website, 2012.**

An analysis that I wrote for the *Asia Pacific Media Educator* angered local media bosses, especially the Rupert Murdoch-owned *Fiji Times*. *The Times* Australian executives went after my head at USP. They failed. It is an irony that media executives who are so quick to invoke media freedom for themselves can be equally zealous about suppressing academic freedom or alternative media freedom.

My ‘early warning’ article was vindicated by the later research articles and eventually *The Fiji Times* was forced to be sold under a 10 percent foreign ownership ceiling under the *Fiji Media Industry Development Decree 2010*.

One of the long-standing board directors, wealthy Mahendra ‘Mac’ Patel of the Motibhai Group, bought the newspaper for an undisclosed sum and he was subsequently jailed by a military-appointed judge for a year for corruption over a separate action involving his time as chairman of Fiji Post (Fiji’s top businessman jailed, *Business Day*, 14 April 2011).

### 3. Pacific Media Centre

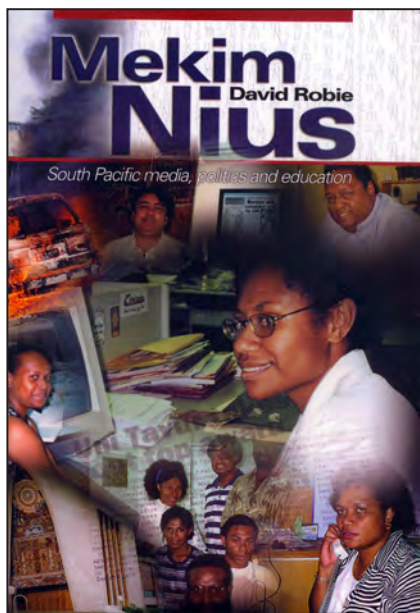
When I joined AUT University in 2002, I had already a strong portfolio of Pacific research that was recognised by the 2003 and 2006 Performance-based Research Fund (PBRF) national audit and I was charged as director with the task of establishing the Pacific Media Centre as part of AUT's Creative Industries Research Institute along with quite a few supporters. This centre was launched by then Minister for Pacific Island Affairs Luamanuvao Winnie Laban in October 2007. This was the first specifically media and journalism research centre established in the country. The first two Advisory Board chairs were Scoop Media's Selwyn Manning and TVNZ *Tagata Pasifika's* John Utanga, and now AUT Pasifika liaison adviser Isabella Rasch is our chair.

The centre—given the Te Reo name Te Amokura, or the red-tailed tropic bird, by Te Ara Poutama's Professor John Moorfield, was established with a rationale to:

- Support Māori, Pasifika, Asia-Pacific, ethnic diversity media and culture production
- Collaborate with other Asia-Pacific research centres, and
- Develop social change and development communication publications

Among outcomes from the centre is New Zealand's only international journalism research journal, *Pacific Journalism Review*, now in its 18th year of publication. During 2012, the centre also launched a new Pacific Journalism Monograph series, with the first title being devoted to an inaugural Pacific media freedom report (Perrottet & Robie, 2012). The centre has also published a range of Māori, Pasifika, Asia-Pacific, research articles, the daily 'diversity' news websites *PMC Online* [www.pmc.aut.ac.nz](http://www.pmc.aut.ac.nz) and *Pacific Scoop* [www.pacific.scoop.co.nz](http://www.pacific.scoop.co.nz), and produced seven media books, mostly in partnership with other institutions. One of the main PMC projects is the *Pacific Media Watch* monitoring and news gathering service, widely adopted around the region. This database has more than 8000 resource files, articles and documentaries archived.

Many Asia-Pacific, New Zealand and international research theses have been carried out by PMC students on topics as wide-ranging as *Development media case studies in Fiji and Vanuatu* (Alex Perrottet); *Media and the politics of climate change in Kiribati* (Taberannang Korauaba); *Security intelligence and the public interest in NZ* with a groundbreaking documentary about the Ahmed Zaoui case (Selwyn Manning); *The 2000 Speight coup in Fiji: Partisan media* (Thakur Ranjit Singh); *New media and Burmese diaspora identities in NZ* (Violet Cho); *Mobile*



**Mekim Nius: South Pacific Media, Politics and Education, 2004.**

*Pacific* on media freedom and transparency for several years. This is digitally archived by the National Library of New Zealand.

## 1. Paradigm shifts

### *Indigenous news values*

Journalists taught in New Zealand are brought up on a diet of Galtung and Ruge about mainstream or dominant news values. But in fact news values are far more complex. The Galtung and Ruge model is not sufficient when working in many parts of the world outside the 'Anglo-American' news frame. Professor emeritus Peter Russell, writing about Aboriginal nationalism in Canada, defined Fourth World communities (or First Nations) as 'Indigenous peoples residing in developed nations, but living in Third World conditions':

Although cultural traditions maintain a significant place in Indigenous communities, it is contended that technological advancements have resulted in the increased proficiency of Indigenous political skills; ironically, the colonised are overcoming the political mechanisms instituted by the colonisers. (Russell, 1996, p. 57).

*phones in rural PNG: A transformation in health communication* (Henry Yamo); and a major study on peace journalism (Rukhsana Aslam).

My own research trajectory has also been wide-ranging, following my 2004 book *Mekim Nius* on research and analysis of the state of media/journalism education in the Pacific (Robie, 2004). My directions have included developing a 'Research journalism' methodology that is recognised by the audit parameters, comparative journalism studies, independent and alternative news models, media freedom and accountability, Pacific and global South media and journalism ethics and strategies and South Pacific marginalised politics. In addition, I also have been publishing my own blog *Café*

However, unlike Third World nations, Fourth World communities ‘cannot separate from imperial power because of their location within the boundaries of the imperialist nation’. This means that Indigenous peoples must either obtain equal access to the political and economic opportunities of the democratic society, or continue to struggle for political autonomy (Robie, 1995, p. 11). The media play an important role in that struggle and thus news values applied by Indigenous media are often at variance with those of the West (First World), East (Second World remnants such as China, Cuba and Vietnam) and developing nations (Third World or global south) in a globalised world. Such media conditions are particularly appropriate for Indigenous First Nation minorities in Australia and New Zealand and the Philippines (such as the Cordillera peoples, or the Lumad and M’boli of Mindanao). They also have a resonance in Bougainville, especially during the 10-year civil war against the state of Papua New Guinea, partly because of a cultural affinity with the western Solomon Islands.

I use a ‘four worlds news values’ matrix to explore the nuances of journalism methodologies in developing countries (Robie, 2005b).

Another model representing the ‘Pacific way’ is used in my teaching and research. In the context of the South Pacific, and particularly Fiji in the wake of four coups, there is a notion of a ‘fifth estate’, a traditional cultural pillar, which is a counterbalance to all other forms of power, including the news media, or Fourth Estate (Robie, 2009b, p. 9). My five-legged tanoa, or kava bowl used for ceremonial dialogue, model seeks to integrate this ‘custom’ factor into journalism with a particular reference to the Pacific region tradition of *talanoa* or debate. It adds a fifth element of ‘unorthodox’ thinking to the more rational and conventional Fourth Estate approach.

### *Kastom and ‘cults’*

Photojournalist Ben Bohane, who chronicled the Bougainville war and many conflicts in the western Pacific, examined the role of culture in political developments and media representations in research in the mid-2000s, concluding that for media to be able to play its Fourth Estate role in the region it must be able to ‘read and interpret the indicators’ (Bohane, 2006, p. 17). He compared the role of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) with the so-called ‘Taukei Movement’ in the 1987 Rabuka coups and Speight 2000 coup, and the four-decade-long struggle for independence by the West Papuans against Indonesian rule. He considers the failure of Western journalists to comprehend the role of



*kastom* (custom), traditional movements and spiritual beliefs has eroded meaningful Western reportage in the region.

For me, Ben has been able to tell far more through his pictures of the Pacific than the average mainstream journalist reporting the region. Take a photo in the lecture presentation of a member of the Kips Kaboni *raskol* gang in Port Moresby—there is an entire underground *raskol* culture barely reported in the wider region.

### *'Balanced' and status quo journalism*

*Nepali Times* editor-in-chief Kunda Dixit argues in *Dateline Earth* that if journalists are serious about tackling the major issues confronting the Pacific such as climate change, exploitation of the forests and mines, and depletion of the fisheries, they will need to 'look at the theory and practice of their profession far more' (Dixit, 2010, p. 54). Kunda was keynote speaker at the inaugural Investigative Journalism conference at AUT University two years ago. He argues journalists need to be far more receptive about new ideas and being non-conformist.

Traditional journalism schools teach you to look for the counterpoint to make stories interesting. They tell you that it is the controversy, the disagreement, which gives the story its tension. Most reportage then sounds like a quarrel, opposites pitted against each other, even when the point of argument may be minor and the two sides are in overall agreement. (Dixit, 1997, then 2010, p. 55)

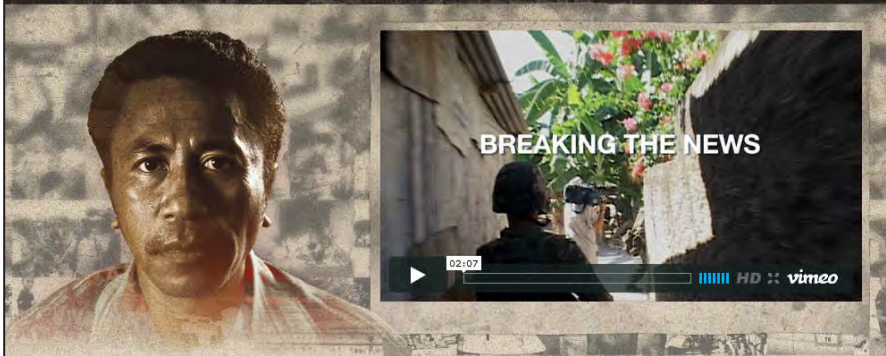
### *Deliberative journalism*

Angela Romano highlights the 'journalists' propensity to overlook topics until they reach the scorching point of crisis' (Romano, 2010, p. 235). This resonates with my own arguments about media 'blind spots' (Perrottet & Robie, 2011). She argues that deliberative journalism requires a reflection on how high standards of objectivity might be balanced with fairness and ethical considerations (Romano, p. 235). Instead of 'kneejerk' responses to dramatic events or issues as in much mainstream journalism, deliberative journalism involves 'greater consideration of the subtle nuances' and obscure details that fit into a more telling 'bigger picture of ongoing trends and issues' (Robie, 2012; Romano, p. 232). A good example of this is a series of case studies on cultural diversity and race relations published in *The Authentic Voice: The Best Reporting on Race and Ethnicity* (Morgan et al, 2006), which 'delivered solid, fundamental journalism and fused voice, context and complexity into one authentic piece' (p. xv).

# BREAKING THE NEWS

A Film By **Nicholas Hansen**

HOME ABOUT NEWS MEDIA GALLERY CONTACT



**Latest News & Screenings**

SCREENING – WEDNESDAY 13 JUNE 2012  
**10.15pm Portuguese premiere at PUFF.**

NEWS – THURSDAY 10 MAY 2012  
**Power Plays and Media Manipulation in East Timor: Breaking the News.** By [Dan Edwards in Metro Magazine.](#)

SCREENING – THURSDAY 29 MARCH 2012

**The high cost of being a truth-seeking journalist in the emerging nation of East Timor**

Filed over four years in Australia's most misunderstood neighbour East Timor, *Breaking the News* explores the high cost of being a truth-seeking journalist in an emerging nation.

Eleven years since the East Timorese successfully voted for independence from Indonesia, *Breaking the News* gets behind the scenes of news and current affairs reportage to challenge those who think a free press automatically comes with independence. What happens to the local journalists when the foreign reporters return safely home after covering each crisis, their stories in the can? Jose Belo and Rosa Garcia are two local journalists enmeshed in the political turmoil of their country, who

***Breaking The News, East Timor, 2010.***

*Critical development journalism*

Development journalism is one of the forms of deliberative journalism, and is often a stage of transition from revolutionary journalism to a media engaged in post-colonial national development, or as part of marginalised Indigenous media within a mainstream society. It involves the ‘fleshing out’ of the structure of national independence begun in the revolutionary journalism phase. This includes the seeking of answers to the question: What shall we do to become the nation we want to be?

Critics of development journalism—mostly from Western countries—actually criticise a distortion of it—the coopting of this media term by politicians seeking self-interested goals (Hester & Wai Lan, 1987, p. 60). I prefer to use the term *critical development journalism* to stress that this is a form of investigative journalism where the political process is put under close scrutiny, but the objective is to seek solutions.

Filmed over four years in East Timor, the documentary *Breaking the News* by Nicholas Hansen explores the high cost of being a truth-seeking critical development journalist in an emerging nation (*Breaking the News*, 2011). Local Timorese journalists Jose Belo and Rosa Garcia exposed the negative impact of international media coverage:

NICHOLAS HANSEN [Voice-over with international media covering burning homes in suburban Dili]: *This small country of a million people gained independence in 1999 and since then has lurched from crisis to crisis. In 2006, the army split in two and groups from the east and west of the nation turned on each other.*

JOSE BELO [Timorese investigative journalist]: The media is like a bullet being used by the politicians here. From both sides against each other, countering each other for their interest. Not for the media itself, not for the people, for them.

It's only instinct that's working and also the way that you communicate with the people, the way that I communicate with them also. [*Background scenes of militants destroying homes*]. I say, 'Look, I have nothing to do with you guys, you do your business, I do my job. I'm just a journalist. I am just covering the events going on.

STREET PROTESTER [*Yelling*]: Yes, we're fighting. Let's all die.

JOSE BELO: They cover up everything. They just show you small bits here and you go there and something else happens. You don't know, you don't understand this way. That's the problem with the international media sometimes. They thought, 'This is it. This is what happened.' But underneath something else happened. So they didn't really go in depth. These Australian [and New Zealand] journalists come in to do their story and after that they go. They leave the country and stay where they are safe. If the Timorese media are doing the story, they stay here and it's risky for them.

In the beginning I had to try and encourage them [*talking about his country's neophyte journalists*]. 'Look, if you do this kind of story, you will be a good journalist. If you're doing just some soft story, you're going to make yourself look like a puppet.

### *Research journalism*

Professor Wendy Bacon of the ACIJ and I have initiated a programme to develop research journalism as an academic discipline by dedicating a special section called *Frontline* in *Pacific Journalism Review* to build experience and support for reflexive practice-based journalism research. We are also collaborating with a new academic online journal at Edith Cowan University called *Research Journalism*.<sup>7</sup> This is a very innovative direction in academic research. And it is closely related to the notion of independent campus-based news media strategies and collaborative projects. Eventually, we hope that the New Zealand academic PBRF framework will recognise research journalism as a category in the same way that investigative and long-form journalism have already been accepted in Australia and the UK. Wendy says:

The argument [has been] accepted that journalism can constitute research within the institutional framework of the UK and Australian university systems but in New Zealand it is still a field evolving ... The situation remains fluid, however, as some senior journalism academics give little encouragement to practice-based research while other institutions are still nervous or reluctant to put forward unconventional research (Bacon, 2012, p. 157).

There are already success stories in this genre of research, mostly in Australia, but also including New Zealand. Karen Abplanalp, for example, has produced a major investigation into the New Zealand Superannuation Fund investment in the giant Freeport McMoRan gold and copper mine at Grasberg in West Papua. This mine has been plagued by human rights allegations spilling over into shootings and a three-month strike last year.

Karen's article was developed into the lead feature article in *Metro* magazine last December (Abplanalp, 2012). Last month, the Super Fund announced that it would be withdrawing its \$1.28 million investment and Karen has since been awarded the Bruce Jesson Prize for Emerging Investigative Journalism (Perrottet, 2012).

In 2010, former *Scoop* co-editor Selwyn Manning produced a groundbreaking documentary, *Behind the Shroud*, about the Ahmed Zaoui 'war against terror' case about the frame-up and denial of human rights to an Algerian theologian seeking political refugee status in New Zealand. This was research journalism as part of his Masters Communication Studies degree (Manning, 2011). Another



*Behind the Shroud*, an example of both documentary and research journalism.

example, although it is slightly before this *Frontline* programme began, is photojournalist John Miller's inquiry into the monocultural media's coverage of the Ngatihine Land/Forestry legal dispute in 1976-8 (Miller, 2011). His research exposed the inabilities of the media at that time to address cultural 'blind spots'.

The growing West Papua crisis is another 'blind spot' which is largely ignored by the New Zealand media. It also ignored East Timor and then suddenly the global political climate changed after the Santa Cruz, or Dili massacre happened in 1991. Eight years later, East Timor was becoming independent. West Papua is the major political crisis of our times in the Pacific (Perrottet and Robie, 2011).

The security issues and implications for the region are far more critical than even in Fiji.

Foreign journalists and independent human rights remain banned in West Papua. This is no excuse for journalists to turn their backs on Melanesian people who are on the brink of genocide. When did the last New Zealand journalist report there?

An ABC 7.30 Report excerpt summarises the current situation. Social media and citizen journalists are critical now as part of the rise of public awareness (West Papua arrests, ABC 7.30 Report, 4 October 2012). The growth of independent news agencies, such as West Papua Media Alerts, are an example of this development of semi-professional independent and citizen journalism because of the failure of mainstream journalism to report blind spots:

LEIGH SALES [Presenter]: *An Australian funded counter-terrorism unit in West Papua is facing new accusations of abusing its power in the troubled Indonesian province. The notorious squad known as Detachment 88 has launched a fresh crackdown on independence activists, in the wake of an expose by this program in August. Eight men have been detained and accused of bomb-making. Separatist*

*leaders claim the explosives were planted and they've been framed to justify the squad's activities. Hayden Cooper has this report:*

HAYDEN COOPER [Reporter]: Jayapura, West Papua is a city marred by violence and tension, where independence leaders have been arrested, beaten, killed. And where police have been confronted by unruly and angry demonstrations.

When 7.30 travelled to the province in August, the crackdown on the independence movement was already severe, resulting in several deaths, including of this man, independence leader Mako Tabuni, shot in this street, witnesses say, by the Australian-trained and funded police unit Detachment 88.

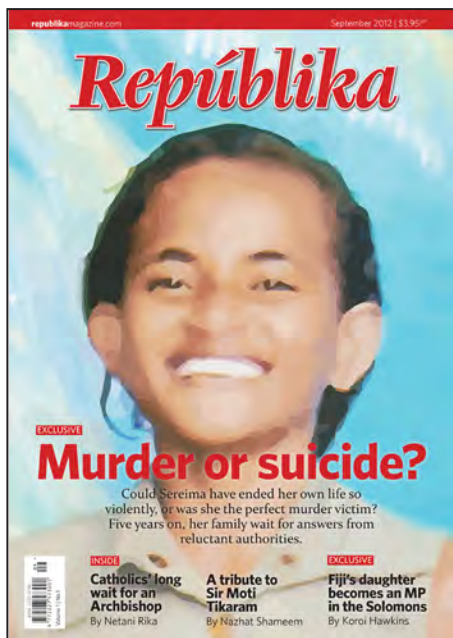
ERSON WENDA [*Relative, voice-over translation*]: Clearly, it was them who killed him because we saw them shoot him and take him to their hospital.

HAYDEN COOPER: Since then, the crackdown has worsened. Victor Yeimo succeeded Tabuni as leader of the West Papuan National Committee, KNPB. This week, he sent this video to 7.30.

VICTOR YEIMO [Chairman, KNPB]: We are the non-violent activists in West Papua. We will fight for our right of freedom according to the peaceful means in West Papua. We demand our right of self-determination to a referendum to be held in West Papua by UN peacefully and democratically.

HAYDEN COOPER: But the Indonesian authorities don't believe his claim of non-violence and they're pursuing KNPB like never before. In June, Indonesian soldiers went on a rampage in the highlands town and KNPB stronghold of Wamena, and now in a new development, police have raided the homes and offices of KNPB members in the area. Last weekend [September 29-30, 2012] eight were arrested and witnesses say once again Detachment 88 was involved.

Another critical issue facing the region is global warming. South Pacific media cannot afford to rely on the Australian and New Zealand media or politicians alone. Pacific journalists need more training and fast and to develop far more critical skills on reporting the environment. The initiatives of agencies such as the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP) in Samoa are important but more is needed in the media and its needs to be systematic. The



The first edition of *Republika* magazine, September 2012.

offender can be imprisoned for up to 12 years without parole and the law is clearly a violation of Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. And truth is not recognised as a defence. It would be disastrous if any Pacific country, such as Fiji, wanted to do a copycat law and gag cyberspace.

In the Philippines at least 165 journalists have been murdered since 1986—32 of them in the Ampatuan massacre in Mindanao in 2009. Three years later nobody has been convicted for these atrocities. The Philippines is a far more dangerous place for the media under democracy than it was under the Marcos dictatorship. There is a culture of impunity.

Deliberative and critical development journalism have an essential role to play in the future of the South Pacific region. So does peace journalism, another form of investigative and deliberative journalism, and human rights journalism. And a new generation of educated journalists has a responsibility to provide this for the people.

Pacific journalists now have a greater task than ever in encouraging 'democratisation' of the region and informed insights into development, environment

future of entire nations and cultures are at risk and the need for media to report mitigation and adaptation strategies more effectively is vital.

This lecture began with a message about global media truth, transparency and accountability. Equally this is a challenge for the Asia-Pacific. The most disturbing trend in the digital age is electronic martial law—a draft new law in the Philippines criminalises e-libel in an extreme action to protect privacy. The Supreme Court has ruled to temporarily suspend this law. But what happens next? Will it be ruled unconstitutional or will the politicians prevail?

This *Cybercrime Prevention Act* is like something out of the Tom Cruise futuristic movie *Minority Report*. An

and peace issues facing island states. The deliberative journalist seeks to expose the truth and report on alternatives and solutions. Journalists need to become part of the democratic solution rather than being part of the problem.

Professor John Henningham gave the first journalism professorial in Australia in 1992. He said then two decades ago:

Freedom of the press is a precious right, which is ultimately for the good of the whole community. No one should be more aware of this than our journalists. Unless *they* do learn to value press freedom, journalists and publishers will be responsible for losing it. (Henningham, 1992, p. 37)

John was a strong mentor for me, especially when I was at UPNG. Now, 20 years later, I have been today giving the first journalism professorial address in New Zealand and the Pacific. It is fitting that I have quoted from his speech.

Finally, some *good* news in Fiji as it approaches the 2014 elections with the founding of a new magazine that makes precisely these pledges. In the very first edition, THE REPUBLIKA MANIFESTO declared:

‘We aim to regain some of the vibrancy of a free media, to act as a mirror on society without fear or favour. The Pacific—and Fiji—has not been immune to the ethical lapses ... common around ... the world. ‘We anticipate high standards ... and we will explain Fiji to Oceania and Pasifika to Fijians’. (*Republika* Manifesto, 2012)

Kia kaha manawanui

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16 October 2012



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