



BEARING WITNESS

Words by **Henk Haazen**

Thirty years after the bombing of the *Rainbow Warrior*, a crew member reflects on its legacy for Greenpeace, New Zealand and the Pacific Ocean.

What is the point in writing a story in 2015 about an event that happened in 1985? It's a good question – and one we could also ask about Anzac Day remembrance and memories of wars fought long ago.

I was discussing this with a friend; as he pointed out, the reasons for remembering anniversaries change over the years; for example, from being sad to being determined.

I was a crewmember on the *Rainbow Warrior* when it was blown up by French Secret Service agents on July 10 1985, while tied up alongside Marsden Wharf near downtown Auckland.

For me this story starts in the USA when I joined the Greenpeace vessel *Rainbow Warrior* as third engineer. Our first job was to put a fore and aft sailing rig on the old Aberdeen trawler. She had a lovely hull and turned out to be a gorgeous sailing boat. Our first mission in the Pacific was to help relocate the people on Rongelap Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Their island was contaminated by fallout



Henk Haazen joined *Rainbow Warrior* as third engineer several months before she was bombed on 10 July 1985: "We and most of the New Zealand public lost some of our innocence."

from North American atmospheric nuclear bomb testing, ironically code-named Bravo. The Americans had deliberately exposed the island population as living experiments to the testing to be studied for future observations.

The answer to the experiment was that they were – and still are – severely affected. We helped them move with their dismantled

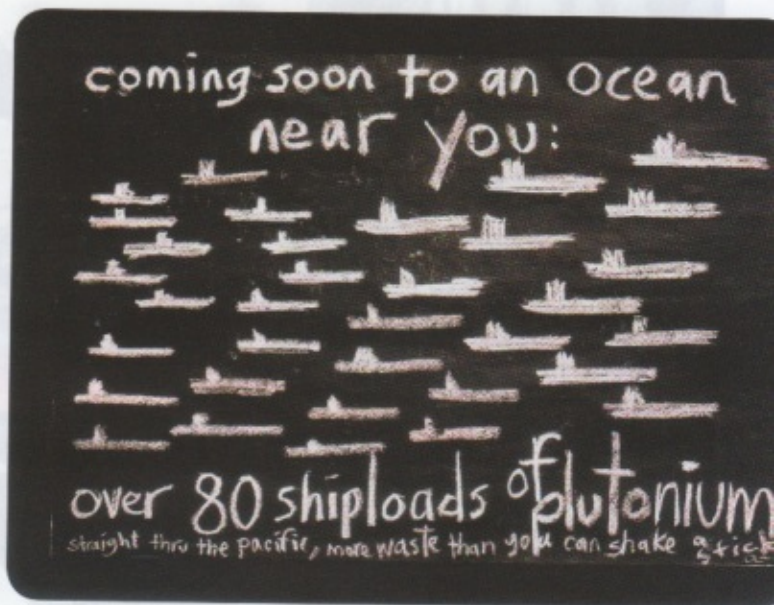


People from Rongelap Atoll stow their dismantled homes on the *Rainbow Warrior*.

homes and everything they owned lashed on deck. They moved from their ancestral homeland to an uncontaminated island that they had to lease. In the Marshall Islands, you are born with land rights through your mother's side so you always have a place to live and grow your food. The Rongelap people lost this

birthright. They asked for our help only after their government and the American government refused to relocate them.

For our crew, it was a poignant experience. It made us a tight group and would set the scene for our next big campaign: to stop French nuclear testing in French Polynesia. The plan was to have a short stopover in Auckland to get together with local yacht crews and then sail out of Auckland with a Nuclear Free Peace Flotilla heading to Mururoa in French Polynesia. There, we would stay



just outside the 12-mile exclusion zone to bear witness. In the Greenpeace tradition, it was always going to be a non-violent campaign and this was made clear right from the beginning.

The French Government had other ideas. As the *Rainbow Warrior* lay alongside Marsden Wharf, the French secret service agents set two bombs under her hull. It was just before midnight, while the ship was fully crewed. There was total disregard for possible human casualties; our friend and the ship's photographer, Fernando Pereira, was trapped in the aft cabin as the ship sank. He was murdered, casually, and left behind two kids.



Henk Haazen onboard his yacht, *Tiama*, mid-Tasman as part of a flotilla.



TOP: The picture that shocked a nation: *Rainbow Warrior* crippled at Marsden Wharf after the bombing in July 1985; MIDDLE and ABOVE: French secret agents Alain Mafart and Dominique Prieur.



THE DOMINION

FRIDAY JULY 12 1985

30c

Terrorists sank *Warrior*

By BERNARD LAGAN and NZPA
 TWO limpet mines may have caused the explosions which sank the *Rainbow Warrior*. Suspicious that two bombs were stuck to the hull of the 40-metre ship, divers last night found a second badly damaged area at its stern.

Limpet mines linked to blasts



Prime Minister David Lange said last night that more than 200 of his supporters had gathered in the Wellington Convention Centre to celebrate the sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior*.

Mr Lange was kept informed of the ship's destruction from the sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior* by the radio.

It is understood Mr Lange was told by police that divers had discovered two limpet mines attached to the hull of a ship known as the *Warrior* and that a great landing force of commandos had been sent to the ship.

Mr Lange said he was shocked and angry that the ship had been sunk. He said he was sure the ship was not a terrorist target.

Through his regular radio reports, Mr Lange said he was sure the ship was not a terrorist target. He said he was sure the ship was not a terrorist target.

Police: NZ not immune

The sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior* showed New Zealand was not immune to terrorism or sabotage. Police Commissioner Ken Thompson said last night.

He said he was sure the ship was not a terrorist target. He said he was sure the ship was not a terrorist target.



The party-embellished *Rainbow Warrior* at Marsden Wharf yesterday.

'The lights went out, the music stopped'

FRANCISCO PARRERA, a party-embellished *Rainbow Warrior* crew member, said last night that the ship was not a terrorist target.

He said he was sure the ship was not a terrorist target. He said he was sure the ship was not a terrorist target.

'Frightening dimension'

A FRIGHTENING new dimension has been added to the *Rainbow Warrior* saga, police say last night.

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Sea yields second black box

A MEMBER of the New Zealand Party cabinet has been identified as the pilot of the *Rainbow Warrior*.

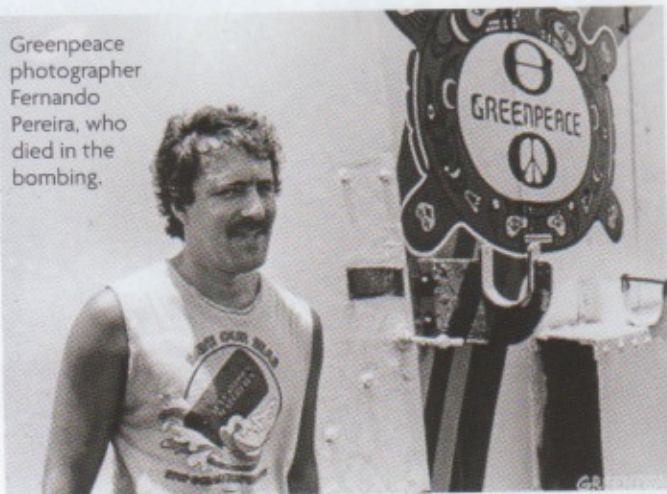
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NZ Party councillor quits 'shambles'

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Greenpeace
photographer
Fernando
Pereira, who
died in the
bombing.



A friendly nation had come into a New Zealand harbour and committed an act of international terrorism by blowing up a non-violent protest vessel. There was no warning given.

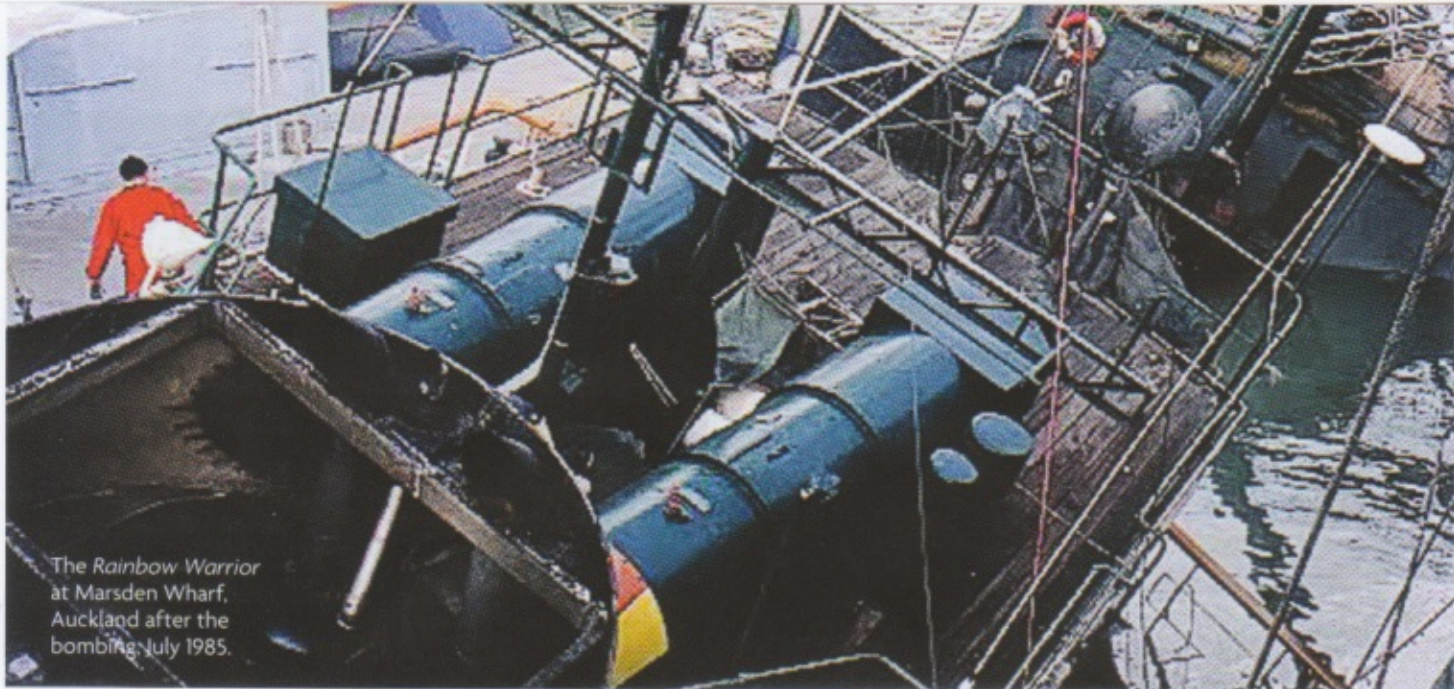
Initially the police thought it was our fault, that we must have done something wrong with the ship. But the Navy divers found the hull buckled in from the outside; if the explosion had happened inside the ship, the tears in the hull would have been pushed out, not in.

The first bomb exploded beside the engine room, leaving a hole big enough for a man to walk through. The second bomb – the one that killed Fernando – was placed on the propeller shaft, crippling the ship to ensure she would never again go to sea.

“The first bomb exploded beside the engine room... the second bomb was placed on the propeller shaft...”

One of the fake Swiss passports on which Alain Mafart and Dominique Prieur travelled to New Zealand as Alain and Sophie Turenge.
BELOW: The peace dove still flies on the sunken *Rainbow Warrior*.





The *Rainbow Warrior* at Marsden Wharf, Auckland after the bombing, July 1985.

For me, a young ordinary seaman, and for most of the crew, it seemed unreal. When excellent work by the New Zealand Police proved that the French secret service was responsible, we and most of the New Zealand public lost some of our innocence. It has made me wary of statements made by politicians.

A few books have been written about the bombing of the *Rainbow Warrior*. There is even a Hollywood movie with all the ingredients of a good spy thriller, but for the people of French Polynesia and the Marshall Islands there is reality: their lands and seas are poisoned. They are still living with the effects of nuclear contamination on a daily basis.

In 1995, exactly 10 years after the bombing, I went back to French Polynesia. The French had decided to do another round of nuclear testing – how ironic is that? We were part of a flotilla of 14 vessels; most were from New Zealand but some boats were from Fiji and Chile.

It was a long ocean passage for a small boat from anywhere to get to Mururoa, and it required a good boat and good seamanship. Mostly it required a big commitment from the individuals involved, but we did have a bit of fun when we got there.

Some of the crews took their boats or their dinghies into the 12-mile exclusion zone around Mururoa but most of us stayed



just outside the zone, bearing witness and telling the story of what was going on while getting chased by boats and planes from the French Navy. GPS had just started to become affordable so we could meet up in pre-determined locations for strategy discussions on what to do next. We used an Auckland city map overlaid on the chart for Mururoa so we could meet on the corner of Queen and Wellesley Streets, for example.

We also had the occasional party. I recall a barbecue on the deck of the *R Tucker Thompson* and some of the ships' crews rowing back to their boats at night, struggling to find their mother ships amidst the ever-changing positions of the flotilla boats drifting in the mid-Pacific Ocean. All is well that ends well.

The French did stop their nuclear testing, and I'm sure the work by the Nuclear Free Flotilla people had a lot to do with that. Over the years I helped organise two other nuclear-free flotillas



ABOVE: Prime Minister Helen Clark addressing crowds before the nuclear free flotilla departed Auckland in 2002.