

Samoa Military Policy armed with machine guns, rifles and pistols.

In December that year the force moved in on the village of Viamoso and seized Tupua Tamasese on a charge of non-payment of tax. He was found guilty and sent to Auckland's Mt Eden Prison for six months. There he was visited by Sir Maui who strongly disagreed with what his government had done. He told Tupua Tamasese: "I came but to see your face and as I looked into the countenance of a tama au Ariki — a prince indeed — lineal descendent of kings where genealogical lines reach back into the twilight of fable — deprived of hereditary titles, degraded, deported and imprisoned."

By the end of 1929, when Tupua Tamasese was back home, the exile Alfred Smyth was entitled to return home. He did so with Alfred Hall Skelton, a lawyer acting for Nelson who at the time was suing the New Zealand Herald for libel.

The two arrived in Apia harbour on December 28, 1929, a day Samoans remember as Black Saturday.

Allen decided the time had come to crack down on the Mau and any tax-evaders, the main form of Mau passive resistance, were to be arrested. As the Mau marched to Apia harbour to greet Smyth and Hall Skelton, police moved in to arrest a man. The arrests were conveniently made near the police station where armed police were in wait. As a struggle broke out between the arresting policemen and the Mau men, the police poured out of the station and opened fire with side-arms. As Samoans fell to the ground wounded or dead, others stoned the police who retreated to the police station. Unknown to the other police, one policeman died. At the station a sergeant who had served as a machine gunner in the Western Front, armed himself with a Lewis gun and began firing at the Mau. Police with .303 rifles also opened fire.

Into an empty street by the police station walked the brave Tupua Tamasese, his arms held high calling for peace. A police rifleman fired at him, mortally wounding the Samoan prince. Tupua Tamasese was one of eight Samoans to die that day, but before he died he made an urgent appeal to Samoans:

My blood has been spilt for Samoa.

I am proud to give it.

Do not dream of avenging it, as it was spilt in maintaining peace.

If I die, peace must be maintained at any price.

The Samoans, in keeping with their Christian commitment to the ideals of passive, non-violence, did not take revenge, and as Allen's men began raiding villages and wrecking homes, the Samoans melted into the rugged and wild bushlands behind Apia.



Mau procession, Apia, Samoa.

In New Zealand the news of the killings shocked Nelson and others. Sir Maui, already convalescing after a severe illness, suffered a severe relapse on hearing the news.

Allen was not about to give up; he brought in the navy and the air force to hunt down the Mau in the bush. In the process two more Samoans were killed, but the Samoans always kept the peace.

In the end the Mau came in for talks and an uneasy peace resulted, but conditions only marginally improved. Nelson returned after his five year exile only to be arrested again and sent to jail in New Zealand and exiled for a further 15 years. He took that to mean exile for life, for he was ill and did not expect a long live.

In 1935 the first real hope came when the first Labour Government of Michael Joseph Savage was elected to office. The great Labour leader Harry Holland, who had died two years before, had been a strong advocate in New Zealand for the Mau and was a tireless critic of New Zealand actions in Samoa. Savage knew little about Samoa, and even less about what to do with the place. He was motivated by a Socialist humanitarian and an opposition to colonialism. Many of the Mau grievances were recognised and changes were made. Nelson was allowed home, and limited, but democratic, Samoan representation was allowed on the advisory groups.

Although the Labour government was less oppressive towards Samoa than the governments of Coates, Sir Joseph Ward and George Forbes had been, they had no clear idea of what to do with Samoa. So it was not until 1962

that Samoa finally won the independence it felt it should never have lost.

While New Zealand now treats Samoa as an independent nation, at least at an official level, much of the paternalism and racism which characterised the rule in the Mau days remains. It is seen in the treatment of overstayers and the condescending tone often taken by New Zealand in government-to-government exchanges.

Even the recent Privy Council issue highlighted that. The Prime Minister Muldoon said it would be resolved in "Pacific way" talks with Samoa's Va'ai Kolone, and then he did the un-Pacific thing of making it clear he wanted quick action. When a draft protocol was decided on, the Minister of Justice Mr Jim McLay was despatched to Samoa to discuss the final draft. In his briefcase was the final draft already printed by the Government Printer; discussion was obviously not wanted.

The story of Mau, and to a certain extent that of subsequent relations, is a story of white New Zealanders failing to understand the depth and nature of the culture they were dealing with. Some New Zealanders in the 1920s were basically weak and uncertain people not knowing where they were going. They were infected with the belief that whites were destined to rule, and they tried to do that in Samoa. This frail society came face-to-face with Samoans. A weak, crisis ridden and vacillating nation with brawn but insufficient wit came up against a confident, assertive people with a rock firm notion of who they were, and proud of it. It was a recipe for disaster, and that is what resulted.