

Reply

Jean-Marc Regnault

My paper was originally written for a scholarly journal specializing in international relations (*Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique*). Most of the readers of that journal are Francophone (if not Francophile). My paper was aimed at informing these readers (who are not well informed about Pacific islands countries) about what is at stake within the region. In order to do so, I had to express the different arguments concerning nuclear testing. Readers of the current version are sufficiently aware to judge whether or not these arguments are out of date.

The fact that religious and nonreligious organizations have contested normally accepted arguments about nuclear testing is not at all hidden in the paper. On the contrary, I indicate at the end of the essay that France must confront opposition and criticisms that have continued to increase, and I name explicitly the institutions that are behind this movement.

I regret that some of my critics did not consider the perspectives from which I wrote this essay. It is not possible to say everything in such a short paper; neither is it possible to develop every point of view. Nor is it in the nature of academic journals to be forums offered to militants of this or that cause. It is in the very nature of these journals to offer their readers objective explanations of what is at stake, and through my essay, readers will see that there is no single, politically correct thought on nuclear questions.

If the knowledge of these elementary rules had been taken into account, the majority of the criticisms lodged here would never have seen the light of day, although some of them are useful and pertinent. The gravity of certain assertions obliges me unfortunately to neglect the constructive criticisms and instead respond to those that question my intellectual integrity.

We must differentiate between a scholarly paper and a militant polemic.

The intellectual narrowness of some militants pushes them to consider that a critical mind leads only to a systematic dismissal of their opponents' arguments. They do not accept that their own arguments are not fully supported. This is why they do not know how to read and understand the terminology I have used. For example, the phrase "the somewhat reassuring IAEA report" that I used does not at all mean that *I* am reassured by this report but, objectively, that the reading of this report (I was in the amphitheater at the University of French Polynesia when it was presented) shows that the scientists who wrote it are not too anxious. Readers, as far as they are concerned, will think of it what they wish.

In no way have I been the agent of the French authorities who put forward the thesis of the "nuclear tests' harmlessness." I have only tried to present what was, and still is, the unchanging official discourse from the French authorities. When I present the vision on the part of Pacific Islanders (or at least, many of them) that nuclear power is an instrument of total destruction, whereas it is seen as a deterrent by the nuclear powers, have I sided with one against the other?

The "dialogue" that *The Contemporary Pacific* offers here is not a proper dialogue, because one party does not attempt to listen to the other one. I regret above all that some criticisms reveal the ignorance of their authors about me as well as the institution to which I belong—the organization of which cannot engender and does not allow closed-mindedness (*pensée unique*).

The crudeness of some of the attacks is disappointing. How could I seriously imagine that my paper would be part of a Free Mason plot to cover up the past misbehavior of the former French Polynesian government? How can I be accused of enlisting my young students into a "Big Brother" way of thinking? How can someone claim that I was uninformed about the Evangelical Church, when I am solicited to publish essays on it in the columns of the local press? My students will laugh at hearing these false allegations.

It is more important than ever now, at the moment when the French territories of the Pacific are experiencing important political upheavals, that political leaders and future leaders engage in the spirit of scholarly truth, which begins with complete intellectual honesty. It is not easy, certainly, for intellectual honesty to win electoral battles or to help certain causes triumph, but without it, no one can build a "great" nation.