

The Samoan Massacre

DECEMBER 28th, 1929

Foreword

The Western Samoa Mandatory Administration, in the early morning of December 28th 1929, without antecedent or occasional provocation, killed fifteen Natives and wounded some 50 others by the discharge, from rifles and a machine gun, of expanding or dum-dum bullets.

Although a Force of 250 Military Police, recruited on the authority of the late Sir Joseph Ward to relieve the Naval Brigade operating in Samoa, were demobilised after the unanimous objection of the Public, Press, and the New Zealand Seamen, an aged High Chief, and 72 other leaders suffered imprisonment for refusing to abandon the National Organisation instituted as a protest against the policy of Absolutism, and the Maladministration of the Affairs of the Territory as disclosed by a Commission of Experts, including Mr. Paul Verschaffelt, who was honoured subsequently by His Majesty the King and reappointed, for a further term of seven years. Public Service Commissioner for the Dominion.

The information contained in letters, &c. herein was authenticated during a residence of nearly two months in the Auckland Province; and the resignation alone of the Prime Ministership by the late Sir Joseph Ward is a vindication of the Samoan claim to the same Justice and Liberty enjoyed by the Peoples of New Zealand, Tonga, Australia, and other component parts of our Great British Common wealth of Nations.

C. W. Owen.
GLEBE, HOBART, TASMANIA.
November 1st, 1930

APIA, Samoa.

February 11th, 1930.

HIS EXCELLENCY, THE ADMINISTRATOR OF WESTERN SAMOA, Apia.
Your Excellency,

Referring to correspondence between Your Excellency and myself relating to acts of violence perpetrated by members of the Police or other uniformed Persons, and referring to my application on behalf of the Samoan Ladies that they should meet you tomorrow morning, namely, February 12th at 9 a.m. at Mulinuu, I am instructed to report that the Leading Ladies concerned in these acts of violence have already this morning brought before Your Excellency the gist of what would be represented to you tomorrow. These Leading Ladies departed from your presence this morning with the full conviction that no protection against terrorisation of Women and Children could be granted by Your Excellency and that your Excellency's attitude was such that terrorisation must be expected to be continued until the Women of Samoa can persuade their hunted and hounded men to surrender themselves to an unknown fate.

It is true that Your Excellency has averred that "wanted" men (whoever they may be and for what they may be "wanted") are supposed to submit themselves to the High Court for trial. It is equally true that the High Court, in its Coronial Judgement, has found that the Rifle Fire resulting in the death of Prince Tamasese and other Samoans has been pronounced by the Coroner (namely, the Chief Judge) as being without his ability to find that fire necessary. The Ladies of Samoa remember the tragic circumstances surrounding the death of Molia. This matter was brought to the notice of Your Excellency and the Commodore this morning by Chieftainess Taisi. An authority informed her that she had been misinformed. She responded by saying that she had been present personally at the Hospital when the dying depositions of Molia were recorded by the Chief Judge as Coroner. In all the circumstances, and in view of Your Excellency's repeated asseverations to the effect that the Samoan men must "come in" and surrender, and in view of Your Excellency's apparent attitude that the Mau must be broken, and in view of the fact that the Mau as such has been scattered by Gunfire to the four winds of Heaven, the Women of Samoa feel that it would be at once futile and stultifying to themselves to

ask Your Excellency for protection against the ravages of uniformed persons. The Ladies of Samoa feel that if the terrorisation of the Women and Children is ordained under Your Excellency's authority to continue, then it must continue.

I am instructed that it appears to the Ladies of Samoa that their representations to Your Excellency as to the safety of themselves and their children are regarded as of no consequence. The said Ladies are aware that the Commodore has firmly intimated that there will be no further shooting, but they are unable to ignore the fact that Civil Government still remains, and it is Your Excellency, and not the Commodore to say whether or not there shall be further shooting.

The plea of the Ladies to the Commodore was made in desperation. To these Ladies the matter of life and death is more than a matter of obedience to Laws that have never been promulgated, either by the Electors of New Zealand or the People of Samoa. They can but die, as Tamasese and others have died. It is regrettable that death and bloodshed appear to be of small consequence to Your Excellency, as compared with the desire evident and expressed of absolutism.

In view of these circumstances, the Ladies of Samoa desire me to say, on their behalf, that they are unable to keep the suggested appointment at 9 a.m. on the 12th instant at Mulinuu. They desire me to forward a copy of this letter to the Commodore, and another copy to His Honour the Chief Judge, and another copy to the Prime Minister of New Zealand.

On behalf of my Lady Clients,
I have the honor to subscribe myself,
Your Excellency's most obedient Servant,

Thos. B. Slipper.

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND.

March 1st, 1930

Dear Father John Cullen,

With reference to copies of correspondence, New Zealand papers, etc., forwarded you in connection with the Massacre, on 28th December last, of High Chief Tamasese and other Samoans, I wish to advise that Mr. A. Hall Skelton (a leading Advocate of Auckland with over 20 years experience at the New Zealand Bar) at a Public Meeting held on the 23rd ult, protesting against the inhuman treatment of the Samoans by Colonel S. S. Allen, his Administration, and Commodore Blake of the H.M.S. Dunedin, stated that Father J. Deihl, the American Catholic Priest, was the only Missionary in attendance on the wounded and dying Samoans; also the London Missionary Society, the Anglican Bishop and other Missioners in Apia at the time of the Massacre held aloof. On the day of the Massacre an unsuccessful attempt was made by the Military Police to prevent Father Deihl from performing his duty to the Samoans.

Commodore Blake's illegal action in declaring War on these unarmed and defenceless people has compelled the Samoans to take to the bush, leaving the Women and Children at the mercy of the Naval and Military Forces, who, without regard to the Laws of War, raid dwellings at all hours of the night and early morning, turn Women and Children out of their beds, destroy beyond repair, valuable mats and other property, and generally terrorise these people.

As the Englishman's reputation, in the Pacific, for Justice and Honor is at stake, I respectfully suggest that you place the Samoan Question before the new Archbishop of Hobart with a view to obtaining an Independent Tribunal to consider the grievance of these unfortunate people, and, also to bring to trial the Officers responsible for the Massacre on 28th December last and subsequent shootings.

Yours respectfully,

C. W. Owen
FATHER JOHN CULLEN,
HOBART, TASMANIA.

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND,

March 14th, 1930.

Dear Father John Cullen,

Further to my letter of the 1st, inst., I have to advise now that Mr. T. B. Slipper, Solicitor of Apia, was fined £105 and sentenced to three months imprisonment for protesting to Colonel S. S. Allen, the Administrator, against the inhuman treatment, by Armed Forces, of Samoan Women and Children during the absence of their menfolk.

The Military Policeman, who shot the boy Molia, has been charged with Manslaughter, and will stand his trial at Apia.

The Officials primarily responsible for these Atrocities are permitted by the Ward Government to continue Administering Western Samoa; and despite the unanimously expressed wish of the Public, Press and the Majority Opposition in Parliament, the Ministry autocratically refuse to either resign, or meet Parliament to discuss the situation.

The remaining ambition of Sir Joseph Ward, who is 73 years of age, is to die Prime Minister of New Zealand.

From the foregoing you will understand readily the necessity for immediate action.

Yours respectfully,

C. W. Owen.
FATHER JOHN CULLEN,
HOBART, TASMANIA.

A Samoan National Protest voiced at Vaimoso, on March the 5th, 1930, by High Chief Tuimalealiifano

Tuimalealiifano: I am very old—eighty—four years of age My heart is full of love for my people, as I have experience of what has happened since New Zealand has been working for the Samoans. You said New Zealand is very kind, but I tell you to stand in your position with righteousness. You said that the Government of New Zealand is very kind: I have seen myself and I have experience of it. It is not. Many Samoans, many thousands of Samoans have been buried in the earth. Therefore, listen to me clearly. You should have righteousness and truthfulness. Act as Christ taught us. Be truthful. Why are you telling lies ? The Gospel of Truth has been with us for many years—a hundred years—you taught us and we got it from you. What was the cause of this ? Because of you. Every past Administrator has cut off our heads. Do you understand that? You mention there are people who committed offences, and how about you ? There are also people who have committed offences amongst you. We now see that you are only trying to get something good for you out of us. What about us? We were only starving, dispersed in the bush the sea, and land, everywhere. We have already said that our objects— what the Mau wanted—are in those various petitions, but you say so and so, and so and so, and it is confusing. You said to end the Mau and abandon the Mau, but how about its cargo ? The Mau is like a ship with the Cargo in it. When the ship reaches the land then the cargo will be discharged. Now you said to end the Mau, but how about the objects of the Mau ? You have beaten the Mau and disturbed the Mau and treated the Mau improperly, and now you ask to end it. How about the Mau belongings? I thought you were going to deal with this matter easily and slow, and deal with us carefully, and how about killing the Mau like animals? That is very bad. We know the custom in enlightened countries—when a mans hands are lifted up there is no firing. You, the Government why do you publish in the Newspapers saying the Mau would not bring the wanted men down. We came down that day with our procession without knowing that you had made those exceptional arrangements. Why did not you say to Tuimalealiifano or Tamasese or Faumuina, "Bring and give up the wanted men!" Why did you not demand of us to give up the prisoners?

What I want now is to let the Mau live until it gets what it wants. When they get that they will drop the Mau away. Give us time to disperse and return home and think over the matters that you have put to us. And with regard to the Mau uniforms—they do not hurt the Government, there are no bullets in them. Let us wear our uniform until we get what we are aiming for. Now, what have you given to the Mau? You only urged the Mau to give up, and you have nothing to give to satisfy us. The Mau will not say "Yes", until you have put a Crown on the Mau.

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