

Daily Beast column, calling the remarks "a terrible insult."

Other Polish Americans also criticized the White House, even if they did not blame Obama directly. "The people who wrote his speech were not aware of the nuances," said Jeanette Friedman, director of communications at the North American Council of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews. Obama "should not be held accountable for this. There's no way he could know these fine points. But should someone have vetoed it? Yes."

Friedman's colleague, Jerzy Warman, said that if Karski had been alive to hear the remarks, "he would have made a face as if he ate something very sour."

"But look, let's put it in its proper place," Warman said. "It was a historical mistake, but there was no malicious intent behind it. I wouldn't make it into an earthquake."

As proceedings got under way in The Hague, about 100 people gathered around a large television in a Monrovia teahouse to watch on CNN the sentencing of the man who led a rebel army before being elected president of Liberia. Some insisted Taylor would get no more than 10 years in prison; others demanded the full 80 years requested by the prosecution for aiding rebel war crimes in Sierra Leone.

One could hear a pin drop when Judge Richard Lussick began reading out the sentencing judgment, and his pronouncement was greeted by stunned silence before comments began flying over the outcome.

"I anticipated that the court would sentence Mr. Taylor for 80 years or more, but at least Liberians must be appreciative that the sentence has been reduced to 50 years," said university student Sao Bass, 34.

the same country, culture and identity."

Taylor was Liberia's president from 1997 to 2003 after being elected in the hope this would put an end to Liberia's civil war. However, fighting soon resumed as he faced an uprising against his government.

He fled to Nigeria in 2003 after being indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone. He was captured and extradited to The Hague 2006.

Taylor retains significant pockets of support in Liberia, notably by those who supported his bid to overthrow the detested regime of Samuel Doe, which sparked a civil war in 1989 that eventually was fought by a panoply of factions.

However, many remain deeply bitter that atrocities caused by Taylor during his reign as warlord in his own country have gone unpunished.

1990 during his march on Monrovia to oust President Samuel Doe. AFP-JIJI

"To judge Mr. Taylor for what occurred in Sierra Leone and ignore what occurred in Liberia is for me a betrayal from the part of the international community," said Ruth Mendee, 43.

"My two children were raped in front of me, and those who did it are still here," Mendee added. "I agree that justice must be done for what happened in Sierra Leone, but are we Liberians not humans who deserve justice?"

Alimami Kanu, whose right hand was hacked off by the RUF when he was 11 years old, said the decision "makes me the happiest person on Earth."

Suzannah Vaye also hailed the sentence. Her husband was killed during the last days of Taylor's government in 2003. He

since 2003 and is slowly rebuilding under Nobel Peace Prize-winning leader Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

However, tensions remain high, and her recent re-election was marred by violence and an opposition boycott.

Sirleaf, who admitted to financing Taylor in the early days of his rebellion, was named on a Truth and Reconciliation Commission list of those who should be barred from holding public office.

Some Liberians said the sentence received by Taylor should serve as a stiff warning to other African leaders.

"I believe that the 50 years' imprisonment is fair, considering the gravity of the crimes he committed," said Johnny Lewis, a teacher. "I wish that heads of African states that monitored the trial will learn lesson from this trial."

"This is such a strange election when it comes to religion," Knutson said. "Tensions among various sectors of the religious factions make this a really unusual period."

It becomes all the more unusual during an election year in which the economy, rather than social issues tied to religious belief, is the top issue among voters. Right now, Obama and Romney are polling about even, meaning the election will be decided in the very few states that do not reliably vote either Republican or Democratic.

In those states, independent voters will decide which of the candidates will be in the White House come January. Predicting how the issue of the economy will factor into the race becomes even more difficult when compounded by the unknown variables of how they will decide on matters of conscience and how

deeply they follow the dictates of their religion.

The unknowns are compounded by Roman Catholics who are watching as the church hierarchy sues the Obama administration over health insurance coverage for birth control, citing its belief that the government is impinging on religious freedom.

Romney's faith and the Catholic Church hierarchy's anger at Obama over contraception coverage could prove critical if somewhat "hidden issues" and make them difficult to measure in polling as the campaign moves toward the November vote, according to Carl Raschke, a religious studies professor at the University of Denver.

"Such prejudices or convictions will come into play when it comes time to pull the voting

controversial sermons by his former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, surfaced on television and online. Obama eventually severed his ties to Wright, whom the president had credited with leading him to Christianity.

Eligible voters among the nation's few million Muslims, who are not historically tied to either party but overwhelmingly backed Obama in 2008, are disappointed with the president's inability to make Israel budge on ending Jewish settlements in land Palestinians claim as their own.

Jews, a small but powerful group of voters, historically back Democratic candidates but have seen Obama get uncharacteristically tough with Israel over the settlement issue. Even though the president has since dropped the issue following a stern and public rebuke from Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu, resentment continues to linger.

Samoa national day

Fifty years of stability, peace and progress

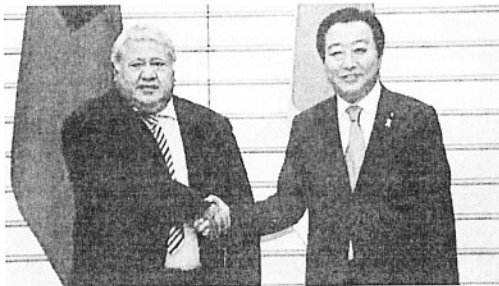
Leiatuaa Kilifoti Eteuati
AMBASSADOR OF SAMOA

Today, June 1, the people of Samoa proudly celebrate the 50th anniversary of Samoa regaining her full independence, with thanksgiving to the Almighty God, and with sincere appreciation and good will toward the people of all nations.



On this auspicious occasion, I have the honor on behalf of His Highness Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi, head of state of the Independent State of Samoa, the leaders and the people of Samoa, to extend my warmest and sincere greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akhito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, the leaders and the people of Japan, as well as to all the Samoans living in Japan.

Samoa was the first Pacific island country to regain its full independence, in 1962. Located just west of the international date line and 13 to 16 degrees south



Friendly ties: Samoan Prime Minister Tuila'epa Lupefeso and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda in Tokyo on May 22 during his visit to Japan ahead of the sixth Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting. The Samoan leader has attended every PALM summit since the first one in 1997.

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of the equator, Samoa is the largest independent Polynesian nation, and the fifth largest of the fourteen independent Pacific island countries in terms of land area and population.

Samoa (Western Samoa until 1997) was first colonized in 1900 when the three dominant world powers at the time, the United Kingdom, the United States and

Germany, took control and divided the islands of the Samoa Group into two colonial entities: Western Samoa under German control and American Samoa, which became an unincorporated United States territory. The political status of the latter has been retained up to the present, while Western Samoa was taken over by Allied forces at the begin-

ning of World War I, and in 1920, it became a mandated territory under the League of Nations and administered by New Zealand. Western Samoa was placed under the United Nations Security Council in 1946, the year the council was established, with the specific task of preparing colonized states for self-government and independence.

On June 1, 1948, the Samoan flag (which has just been adopted by Samoans) was officially raised for the first time alongside the New Zealand flag, to the playing of the New Zealand national anthem and the Samoan official anthem (which has also just been approved after a Samoa-wide competition). This event was of great significance to Samoans, and the conjoint use of both flags and both official anthems continued until 1962.

The colonial period in Samoa was marked by violence and conflict with many Samoan lives lost in contrast to the other Pacific islands, where colonial times were relatively peaceful. The Samoans have always insisted on controlling their own

lives, particularly in their villages, according to Samoan customs, traditions and practices. The colonial authorities demanded full control, and violent clashes inevitably resulted with neither side backing down. It was not surprising that Samoa became the first Pacific island country to regain its full independence. Over the last 50 years, however, the situation has changed, with Samoa becoming a leading example of political, economic and social stability in the Pacific islands region where many countries are facing major challenges.

Samoa has made steady improvements in all facets of her national existence since independence. The quality of the ed-

ucation and the health services have shown marked, continued improvement with, for example, now a literacy rate of 98 percent and over 95 percent of children of primary school age attending school, while the tertiary education graduation rate is amongst the highest in the region on a per capita basis. There is excellent infrastructure with 99 percent of the villages reachable by tar-sealed roads, and electricity and Internet services (mobile phones) are also readily accessible throughout the country, as is running water. Sea transportation between the islands is adequate, efficient and safe due principally to development assistance from Japan, which

went into the construction of substantial wharves as well as large and purpose-built inter-island boats.

This year also marks the 40th anniversary of Japanese volunteers for Samoa during the first 50 years of Independence. In recognition of Japan's part in maintaining this splendid cooperation between our two countries, based on mutual respect and friendship, the Embassy of Samoa in Japan has invited the Japanese Samoa volunteers as their guests at the 50th independence anniversary reception in Tokyo.

I would like to conclude by thanking The Japan Times for giving me this opportunity to share my thoughts with its distinguished readers.

Congratulations
to the People of the Independent State of Samoa
on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of
Their Independence Day

Pacific International Limited
Shiobe Bldg. 6F, 4-9-6, Hatchobori, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-0032
Tel: (03) 3552-9001 Fax: (03) 3552-9004

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SUN REALTY
& INSURANCE CORPORATION
PRESIDENT: SHIZUKO TANI
Viscountess Suite 320 11-36, Akasaka 1-chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-0052
Telephone: 81-3-3584-6171 Facsimile: 81-3-3505-0939
E-mail: sun@sunrealty.co.jp http://www.sunrealty.co.jp