

needed, after the peacemaking politicians have had more success. Till then, the volumes here reviewed will remain interim reports.

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Bougainville: The Mine and the People, by Paul Quodling. Pacific Papers Series no. 3. St Leonards, NSW, & Auckland: Centre for Independent Studies, 1991. ISBN 0-949769-71-1, xii + 116 pages, maps, table, bibliography, appendixes, index. A\$16.95; NZ\$22.95.

Who is to blame for the Bougainville rebellion? Who could have prevented it happening in the first place? Who can now restore the "strife-torn island" to some semblance of normality? And, at the end of the day, who will have gained and who will have lost?

In 1989 these were popular questions in Papua New Guinea, and the normal way of answering them was to point a finger at the actions or inactions of a single individual and add to this some positive or negative remarks about that person's qualities of leadership. Such questions are less popular today because all such answers have been thoroughly aired; there is still no general consensus, nor even any grouping of opinions into clear political perspectives; and the death of all this talk seems more conducive to a resolution of the crisis than does its further repetition. Such is the Melanesian Way.

From this Papua New Guinean per-

spective, Paul Quodling's contribution to the argument is somewhat overdue. Within Port Moresby circles I have heard it said that the rebellion would never have happened if Paul Quodling had still been managing director of Bougainville Copper Limited in 1988, because his knowledge of the Melanesian Way would have enabled him to keep the peace. But no one points fingers at themselves in this kind of debate, and Quodling's own finger is firmly pointed in a more familiar direction—at Father John Momis and the so-called Bougainville Initiative that accompanied his general election campaign in May 1987.

For those who wish to pursue the question of personal responsibility, the centerpiece of Quodling's book is Appendix C, which comprises a photocopy of the five-page letter in which Father Momis suggested that Quodling and his company could only demonstrate their adherence to the Melanesian Way by giving 3 percent of their gross income to the North Solomons Provincial Government, and a photocopy of the one-page letter in which Quodling replied that this would constitute a breach of the agreement between his company and the state of Papua New Guinea. In his brief commentary on this exchange (50-51), Quodling asserts that Momis raised the expectations of the Panguna landowners and other Bougainvilleans to a point from which they could not subsequently be reduced and at which they could never reasonably be satisfied. That, for Quodling, was the "major catalyst" for the rebellion.

The basic problem with this argu-

ment, as Quodling surely knows, is that outrageous demands are part and parcel of the Melanesian Way of doing politics, but rarely do they have such bloody and momentous consequences. I doubt whether anyone who knows the general tenor of debate about the mining industry in Papua New Guinea would find anything especially provocative in the written or public statements of Father Momis, because these exemplify another feature of the Melanesian Way—procrastination. Indeed, the letter to Quodling beats around the bush for so long (talking about the “Melanesian Way”) that the outrageous demand seems almost to be an afterthought. There is a world of difference between the contents of this letter and the statements being made by Francis Ona and his fellow militants in 1988.

In order to substantiate his case against the Bougainville Initiative, Quodling would need to tell a coherent story about what happened in the eighteen-month period that elapsed between the general election of June 1987 and the outbreak of the rebellion in November 1988. But this story fails to emerge from his scattered references to events since that time. Although due allowance must be made for Quodling’s absence from the scene for most of this period, some of his omissions are genuinely odd. Most notably, the text seems to imply that the Namaliu government came to power immediately after the 1987 election and that Father Momis and his cohorts, as members of that government, had the capacity to live up to their campaign promises from that moment on (22).

The chronological appendix corrects this false impression, but there is absolutely no discussion of the Wingti government’s failure to address the general crisis of mineral policy in Papua New Guinea, including the Bougainville problem, during the year that it survived, nor any recognition of the urgency with which the Namaliu government, or at least its Melanesian Alliance membership, *did* try to address these problems when it finally had the power to. *By this time*, toward the end of 1988, the Melanesian Way of compromise had certainly run out of steam on Bougainville.

Defenders of Father Momis might argue that he not only lacked the power to negotiate a solution to the Bougainville problem during that critical year following the 1987 election, but that his infamous initiative reflected, more than it provoked, the impatience of his electorate. Even some of his detractors would maintain that his control of events on Bougainville has been in continual decline, and the initiative was partly intended to arrest this process after it had already begun. Even Quodling might concede this point, given that he makes several approving references to those social scientists who have laid more emphasis on structural than personal factors in their explanations of the Bougainville rebellion. However, not being a social scientist himself, Quodling is content to leave the personal and structural explanations sitting side by side, without making any explicit statements about their relative significance or mutual relationship.

It would not be fair to say that the

primary purpose of this book is to produce an *explanation* of the rebellion, even if historians and social scientists are bound to read it in search of one. Quodling's main intent is to "set the record straight" about the role of his company in the history of Bougainville and Papua New Guinea—for the benefit of an *Australian* audience that might otherwise be misled by what Quodling would certainly regard as mischievous left-wing propaganda. Much of the book is taken up with a recitation of well-known facts and figures, and the appendixes are largely devoted to the reproduction of various reports and articles that have at least excused, if not exonerated, Bougainville Copper Limited from the charges of exploitation and oppression. In this respect Quodling is taking part in a debate where attitudes toward the Bougainville rebellion appear to be polarized between those "leftists" who think that multinational corporations are wicked uncles and all their opponents (including Francis Ona) are therefore heroes, and those "rationals" who think that multinational corporations are good citizens and all their opponents (including Father Momis) are therefore villains. This polarization does not make a great deal of sense in Papua New Guinea, where attitudes toward the Bougainville rebellion have now largely been separated from attitudes toward the multinational corporation, and where the struggle between organization and disorganization is far more significant than the battle between capitalists and socialists. Perhaps Paul Quodling's corporate and political loyalties in Australia have largely prevented him

from telling a much more interesting story about his personal experience of Bougainville and the Melanesian Way.

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Your Flag's Blocking Our Sun, by Helen Fraser. Crows Nest, NSW: ABC Enterprises, 1990. ISBN 0-7333-0035-9, 215 pp, photographs. A\$24.99.

Jean-Marie Tjibaou's deserved reputation as a statesman, climaxed by the irony and tragedy of his death at the hands of a disaffected member of his own Kanak independence movement, ensured his post-mortem cult status. It also guaranteed a rash of instant publications of the "I knew Jean-Marie" variety. Happily, Helen Fraser's book is not one such, though Tjibaou's determined, funny, reasonable presence looms ever larger in her account of living and working as an Australian journalist in New Caledonia from 1982 to 1985. By adopting an explicitly autobiographical mode, she largely avoids the snare of name-dropping, though there are hints enough of privileged access to the highest councils of the FLNKS (Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front) and personal friendship with its leaders.

Helen Fraser arrived in Noumea early in 1982 as correspondent for Radio Australia, the *Melbourne Age* and *Pacific Islands Monthly*. She had a knowledge of French and sympathy for radical causes, but was young, inexperienced, and largely unfamiliar with the territory. I saw her often at the end of that year and thought her lonely, naive,