

The writers point to imponderable factors. The return of the conservatives to power in France "could bring renewed problems," says Henningham. And France's commitment to its independent nuclear deterrent could increase, rather than diminish, with the end of the Cold War and the likely decline of United States influence in Western Europe (Aldrich, 196, 201). It is incumbent on the peoples of the region to retain a critical scrutiny of France's policies and performance in its Pacific territories. The excellent research and frank scholarly collaboration revealed in these volumes make a significant contribution. The fact that the present French administration has provided funding to support the Scarr volume is an encouraging indication of its willingness to accept scholarly critique. The absence of authoritative Kanak contributions is regrettable.

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France and the South Pacific: A Contemporary History, by Stephen Henningham. South Sea Books. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press; and Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992. ISBN 0-8248-1305-7, xvi + 292 pp, maps, tables, photographs, abbreviations and glossary, notes, bibliography, index. Paper, US\$17.95.

Over the past few years a small but significant body of Australian scholarship has emerged concerning the French presence in the South Pacific and, more generally, metropolitan France's policies with regard to its

overseas territories. One only need mention the special issue of *The Journal of Pacific History* 26 (2, 1991), Nic Maclellan's (with Jean Chesneaux) *La France dans le Pacifique: De Bougainville à Moruroa* (Paris: Editions La Découverte, 1992), and *France's Overseas Frontier: Departments et Territoires d'Outre-Mer* by Robert Aldrich and John Connell (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

A natural reaction would be to view this surge in interest for "la France australe" as a response to a series of specific events that climaxed in 1985—the ever-increasing anger within the region at France's pursuit of its nuclear testing program, the sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior*, and the rapid succession of crises in New Caledonia that gave rise to the sentiment that the territory was on the brink of civil war.

Such a narrow interpretation would, however, be misleading. Transcending the events of the 1980s is the fact that Australia, like France, has interests in the South Pacific, and in Melanesia their interests overlap and may well be conflictual. New Caledonia lies right at the tip of the Melanesian "Spearhead" and that spearhead is pointed at Australia. In the circumstances it is scarcely surprising that Australia seeks stability throughout Melanesia, elaborating in a more or less covert manner an antipodean version of the United States' Monroe Doctrine for its particular "backyard."

Against such a perspective *France and the South Pacific* "makes sense," as does the fact that its author, Stephen Henningham, has gravitated over the past decade between an academic career at the Australian National Uni-

versity and a diplomatic career in the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, serving notably at the consulate-general in New Caledonia from 1982 to 1985. Yet this is in no sense a partisan book. On the contrary it is, for the most part, a refreshingly honest study, which emerges from a sea of what are often very emotional statements expressed by antipodean scholars who, in their anger at French stupidity in the South Pacific, blithely confuse the French state, French citizens, francophones, and the French language in their analyses.

Henningham does no such thing. His is a sympathetic eye, which takes pains to establish that metropolitan French strategies and experiences are in no sense unique or aberrant. He points out that New Caledonia was a "settler colony," like Australia and New Zealand; that the gap in life expectancies for Kanaks and Europeans in the territory parallels that of Aborigines and White Australians; and that the political strategies of France with respect to its overseas territories closely replicate those of the United States with respect to its "non-contiguous territories." Most important, he indicates that the ultimate objectives of what may well be some kind of "quasi-sovereignty" for New Caledonia and French Polynesia resemble New Zealand's arrangements with Niue and the Cook Islands and the United States' relationship with the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

The book is structured in an entirely coherent manner: an introductory chapter offering a sound, if conventional, historical perspective on the

French presence in the region; a succession of chapters dealing with the specific geographical entities since World War II—Vanuatu, New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Wallis and Futuna; a review of France's nuclear testing program; and a discussion of relations with other island states, regional institutions, and the two "regional powers" (Australia and New Zealand). It concludes with a short assessment of likely developments in the 1990s.

As is to be expected of a historian, Henningham is painstaking in his respect of detail. In each chapter he takes the reader through what is virtually a year-by-year analysis of events. Because he clearly knows the situation better, his discussion of New Caledonia is significantly richer than that of Vanuatu, for example. But, generally speaking, he cannot be faulted on his knowledge, thereby making *France and the South Pacific* a valuable source of reference. This is reinforced by a comprehensive bibliography that overlooks few major French sources apart, perhaps, from the writings of Jean Chesneaux, Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, and Antheaume and Bonnemaïson's important atlas. Further, in his evident wish to "understand," the author has developed a healthy appreciation of France as a nation and as a superpower: that it survived World War II essentially because of the existence of its overseas territories, and that it remains a superpower in the 1990s and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council because of its "global interests," possession of nuclear weapons, and its status as the world's third most important maritime nation

(in terms of its exclusive economic zones). In so doing, Henningham does not seek to condone France but simply to better understand it.

From time to time the author rises above the presentation of a wealth of facts and events to highlight individuals who have profoundly marked, if not indeed determined, the course of history: Jean-Marie Tjibaou in New Caledonia, Pouvana'a a O'opa in French Polynesia, French Prime Minister Michel Rocard. . . . Regrettably, the treatment they receive remains superficial and fragmentary.

So far so good.

Where the book begins to jar is when it gets closer to home. Although France's presence in the South Pacific "provokes controversy," Australia (and New Zealand) have only "good intentions." The pages devoted specifically to their roles are showered with words like "constructive," "moderating," "consensus," "prompt and generous," "welcoming," and so on. Here the perceptive scholar sheds his academic gown in favor of the grey suit and the elusive tongue of the diplomat. Events of the last few years have demonstrated that Australia's hand is heavy indeed in Melanesia, and speeches clothed in gentle words scarcely conceal an unflinching commitment to *realpolitik*. As one ni-Vanuatu remarked to me recently, "They even try and watch us when we go to piss!" The present crisis in relations between Australia and the Solomon Islands, and the recent expulsion of the Australian ambassador to Vanuatu would suggest that the observation is not devoid of truth.

But then we all have our blind spots.

Henningham's failure to predict that the 1990s may well be a relatively calm

decade for France but a tumultuous one for Australia also points to the fact that he has difficulty in rising above his data. In spite of his predictions, France has placed a moratorium on nuclear testing. More important, the second half of the 1980s was characterized by a surge in French research and reflection on the South Pacific as a whole, and this has been translated into acts, notably a diplomatic offensive and a concern to better integrate the territories into the regional community. These gestures, largely ignored by Henningham, have borne fruit. In a part of the world where dependence is a cruel reality, the discovery of a rich and interested France provides an attractive counterbalance for a number of states to a heavy-handed and economically ailing regional power.

Although less than twelve months have passed since *France and the South Pacific* was published, it already merits a substantially modified conclusion. Nevertheless, the treatment it provides of events since World War II is a serious and, ultimately, a generous one. How nice it would be if it spurred a French scholar to do a similar analysis of Australia and Melanesia!

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Silent Warriors, unabridged edition, by Anirudh Singh. Introduction by Tupeni Baba. Suva: Fiji Institute of Applied Studies, 1992. ISBN 982-301-001-3, 108 pp, map. Paper, F\$6.75.

A new "unabridged" edition of a text first released late last year has just hit the bookstands around Suva. The