

After Moruroa: France in the South Pacific, by Nic Maclellan and Jean Chesneaux. Melbourne: Ocean Press, 1998. ISBN 1-876175-05-2, ii + 279 pages, maps, notes, bibliography, glossary, index. Paper, US\$19.95; A\$29.95.

Moruroa and Us: Polynesians' Experiences during Thirty Years of Nuclear Testing in the French Pacific, by Pieter de Vries and Han Seur. Lyon: Centre de Documentation et de Recherche sur la Paix et les Conflits, 1997. ISBN 2-9508291-5-5, v + 224 pages, maps, tables, glossary, bibliography. Paper, US\$20.00.

From 1966 to 1996, France detonated nearly two hundred atomic bombs in the Tuamotu atolls of Moruroa and Fangataufa. When France finally ceased its last round of tests, after violent demonstrations in Tahiti, and signed the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, it ended what Bengt Danielsson and other critics have called "nuclear colonialism" in French Polynesia. But two nagging questions remain: what will the territory do now that the *Centre d'Expérimentation du Pacifique* is closing down, and what health consequences of radioactive contamination, if any, has Paris kept secret from the local inhabitants in the interests of national security? These two books, one by longtime critics of French nuclear and colonial policies in the region, and the other by members of Europe Pacific Solidarity who are reporting findings from a survey among Polynesians affected by nuclear testing, address those questions.

Maclellan, of the Pacific Concerns

Resource Centre in Suva, Fiji, says in his preface that *After Moruroa* is an update (and translation) of *La France dans la Pacifique: De Bougainville à Moruroa*, which he published in 1992 with Chesneaux, an emeritus historian at the Sorbonne. The opening chapters stress the links between French colonialism and nuclear testing, though Paris thinks of its Pacific territories as benevolently subsidized and "autonomous." Like Robert Aldrich and others, the authors regard World War II as a turning point in the French Pacific, because Paris wanted to regain its tarnished status, after humiliating defeat and Nazi occupation: it would grant greater self-government to its territories, in order to *retain* them and thus secure for itself the desired role of a middle-sized power with nuclear weapons and a globe-spanning presence.

The book traces French mythology about the Pacific from Bougainville's "paradise," through Gauguin and even Jules Verne and the surrealists, to a "grand design" based on "the facade of autonomy" (77). As late as 1986, France described mineral-rich New Caledonia as "an immense aircraft carrier" (80) to defend the region, while the *Centre d'Expérimentation* absorbed the largest French budgetary expenditure in the Pacific. Chesneaux reuses his "franconesia" label to portray anachronistic metropolitan pride in artificially subsidized outposts, in contrast to the enduring nationalism expressed by Kanak and Ma'ohi activists. The authors are critical of France's ongoing "charm offensive" (188) in the Pacific, as it offers money, military aid, diplomatic

reconciliation, and *francophonie* (241), that is, the spread of French language and culture.

They argue convincingly that Paris wants to transform its habitual presence into a springboard to the mythic "Pacific century." French investment in the Asia-Pacific, and the appeal of exclusive economic zones that give France third rank in maritime domain after the United States and Russia, remain powerful attractions, and economic dependency keeps the majority of residents in French Pacific territories from supporting full independence. France promotes a problematic, 1789-derived vision of individual rights in an indivisible republic, rather than self-determination for colonized peoples. The authors say that French policy violates United Nations resolutions on decolonization and ask, "Can Pacific identity be maintained while advancing universal human rights?" (257). Their conclusion is that France will continue to play an important role in the region, but it should do so as an *outsider* who listens better to local voices in a postcolonial era.

The Matignon Accord of 1988 promised New Caledonia a plebiscite on independence ten years later, and the authors assert, "The 1998 referendum will be vital for the future not only of New Caledonia, but the other French territories and the region as a whole" (252). The actual vote, held after the book's publication, was a ratification of the Noumea Accord, which required a change in the French constitution to establish a local nationality in New Caledonia that restricts voting and work rights to long-term residents. The authors

would probably be dissatisfied with the postponement of an independence referendum for fifteen to twenty years, but Kanak negotiators say that Paris will gradually delegate more and more authority to the territory, and that Kanak culture will be validated. The Noumea Accord represents a significant move in the direction that the authors recommended, if not as far toward sovereignty as they and others wanted.

If the quest for sovereignty in the French Pacific remains problematic, so does the issue of health problems due to nuclear testing, because French "national security" has kept crucial data classified. The result is unending controversy about how much environmental and medical damage the *Centre d'Expérimentation* caused in French Polynesia and the region. Maclellan and Chesneaux contest studies that purportedly show French safety precautions were successful, suggesting not only that inspection teams had very limited access to the test sites but also that their reports were quoted selectively to the press by French officials. They cite evidence of cracks below the waterline in the radiated atolls, of accidents that spread contamination and caused worker deaths, and of residual plutonium in Moruroa lagoon, and they attack French arguments that illnesses attributed to nuclear radiation are really the products of modern "lifestyles," that is, unhealthy foods, smoking, and the like. They side with critical sociological surveys by nongovernment organizations such as Europe Pacific Solidarity and dismiss in advance the study being done by the International

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), because that organization promotes nuclear power (114).

Not long after the publication of *After Moruroa*, the agency presented its findings to the Pacific Forum, claiming that despite residual contamination in the atolls, it would cause no measurable health effects on individuals or groups and consequently needed no remedial work or monitoring. As usual, such a clean exoneration of France, with appropriate legal disclaimers against possible lawsuits, invited criticism from opponents of the *Centre d'Expérimentation*. France, after all, solicited the IAEA study, and publicity surrounding its own misrepresentation of the Cousteau report had already caused a scandal during the 1992 French election—which led to the first suspension of nuclear tests for three years. Like Maclellan and Chesneaux, De Vries and Seur, in *Moruroa and Us* (which also appeared before the IAEA report), question the impartiality of the agency, “given its reputation as a pro-nuclear organization” (208). Moreover, widespread suspicion of French secrecy has made it difficult, at this point, to separate fears among Polynesian workers about the effects of the tests, from actual contamination, of which there is troubling anecdotal evidence.

Commissioned by Gabby Tetiarahi's *Hiti Tau* and the local Protestant Church, Netherlands-based Europe Pacific Solidarity conducted interviews with 737 indigenous employees and former employees about their experiences. Unsurprisingly, 75 percent said they went to work for the *Centre d'Expérimentation* “for the money,” but more

revealingly, almost the same proportion said they “were not informed by the employer that recruited them that they were going to work for a nuclear testing programme” (29). Many who worked at the test sites criticized the propaganda “documentaries” they saw on French television about how safe the sites were, since known accidents and deaths occurred, and workers were prohibited from fishing, though they did anyway. In addition, contaminated areas were marked off, sometimes stripped of sand when the radioactive readings were too high, and before outside inspectors visited, the French cleaned up the places they were allowed to see. Any worker who voiced concern was warned, then fired if they continued talking.

More than a quarter of the workers complain about their health and link it to the tests (77), and a large majority feel that the whole program was “a senseless undertaking” (209) that not only subjected their homeland to health risks but made it economically dependent. The *Centre d'Expérimentation*, they argue, was imposed on them by distant authorities, thus becoming a symbol of colonialism to nationalist leaders and rank and file alike. Of those interviewed, 83 percent said that discussions about the legacy of the *Centre* should continue, and 91 percent want more research done. De Vries and Seur recommend the creation of “independent, non-political Polynesian institutions” to defend the legal rights of the workers and promote study and debate on the impact of testing. One can see in their report the clash highlighted in *After Moruroa*, between French discourses of science and uni-

versalism and indigenous notions of cultural identity and sovereignty. The Europe Pacific Solidarity findings reveal that ultimately, many Ma'ohi regard the nuclear tests as "a breach of trust" (124) between Paris and the Polynesians. Not even a geiger counter can erase that kind of scar.

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Bougainville 1988-98: Five Searches for Security in the North Solomons Province of Papua New Guinea, by Karl Claxton. Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence, 130. Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1998. ISBN 0-7315-2750-X, xix + 193 pages, figures, maps, bibliography, notes. Paper, A\$23.

Ten years of armed conflict on Bougainville Island have produced, together with more serious consequences, a substantial body of literature describing and analyzing the situation. The treatise under review is one of the most recent of such publications pouring out of the Australian National University. It offers a perspective, deriving from developing world security theory, different from those that have dominated most writing about the Bougainville conflict.

A key to Claxton's argument is the identification of five "stakeholders" whose interests and activities should be considered in order to expand understanding of the course and possible future of what has frequently been described as the most tragic dis-

turbance in the Pacific since the Second World War. ("Stakeholder" is reportedly a popular term in Australian discussions of public management issues. American usage is rather different; contrast Ackerman and Alstott, *The Stakeholder Society*, 1999.) Stakeholders in the Bougainville conflict, according to Claxton, are the state of Papua New Guinea (PNG); political elites at transnational, national, and local levels; "bits of nation," including churches, nongovernment organizations, media, and the like; communal groups like clans and villages; and individuals. Their goals are, respectively, maintenance of sovereignty; political survival; creation of civil society; subsistence; and safety.

After an introductory chapter and a second describing the background and history of the war, Claxton lays out his theoretical perspective. He recognizes that many different groups' securities are simultaneously at stake in Papua New Guinea (33), and argues that a stakeholder approach has both theoretical and practical advantages for understanding conflict in developing nations. Reader response to this chapter will depend on individual interest in what may well be unfamiliar material drawn from the field of strategic studies, but subsequent chapters provide concrete applications of theory to Bougainville.

Bougainville's secessionist sentiments antedated 1998, but took their present form only after armed conflict began among landholders in the area surrounding the vast copper mine at Panguna. Claxton makes the interesting point that the great threat to sovereignty is "the crisis's potent *symbolic* demonstration of the essential