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Under the very same title these are two good books, which on the whole offer a very fair evaluation of events, policies, and intentions lying behind them, especially as regards New Caledonia. Nevertheless, they are pretty different by their styles, their structures, and the impact they are likely to have on their readers, which is obviously all the more interesting. To put it in a few words, Henningham's sounds more concrete, lively, and opinionated, as may have been expected, after all, of a man who had lived on the spot tense hours with the Australian consulate in Noumea. Hence, from time to time, a trend towards a somewhat journalistic presentation. On the other hand, Aldrich's is dispassionate, more explanatory, and a bit more academic. Such differences between them are particularly striking, for example, in the way each writes on the 1971 to 1980 developments in the New Hebrides (Henningham, pp. 25-46; Aldrich, pp. 196-239). To begin with, just take the titles of the relevant chapters: Henningham's reads "Debacle in Vanuatu" whereas Aldrich's is worded "From the New Hebrides to Vanuatu."

The first feature to be commended is the way in which both handle those documents left by the actors in the events and the huge secondary literature devoted to their topic. Cautious and critical is their selection. And so are their reading of and quotations from them. For example, not only have they been able to resist simultaneously any influence by militant writers like Chesneaux or disingenuous interpretations of scientific data by the Société des Etudes Historiques of Noumea, but they also have given all such biased writings the only rightful place in their own books: that of evidence of the strong polarization of educated opinion in the French Pacific. From this viewpoint, Aldrich's review of involvement in and publications of French intellectuals on the New Caledonia affair (pp. 276-277) may well stay as a model to be followed and imitated, especially as he duly realizes that some people under review consider it a new peg on which to hang their activism and ideologies. As a result, one is tempted to believe that the study of the most recent past by professional historians is quite possible after all, a feeling not too unpleasant.

All important events and issues over the last forty years are considered by each writer, from Pouvana'a's ascendancy to Flosse's maneuvers, and from the setting up of Union Calédonienne to the implementation of the Matignon Accord. Of course, such dramatic affairs as the wave of violence in New Caledonia, "Operation Victor," the killing of Tjibaou, or international campaigns against French nuclear testing receive full treatment, but they are not given too much importance in relation to economic and social devel-

opments; nor are they used as magic keys to decipher contemporary history, a sober approach to be emphasized. One of the most valuable findings of this survey of four decades, which was not entirely unexpected, reads thus: French policy has displayed strong continuities throughout the period, whether the right or the left holds power in Paris: at all events Tahiti and New Caledonia had to remain French (Henningham, p. 239). Besides, most island subjects were content to trust the spirit of reforms then prevailing in Paris and to become French citizens. Quite a few years elapsed before Pouvana'a and his RDPT supporters envisaged something like independence for Polynesia. In New Caledonia it was not until 1975 that a party, the FULK of Uregei, demanded for the first time true independence.

However, as Aldrich reminds us (p. 346), during the late forties and fifties France was far in advance of its imperial counterparts (Great Britain, the United States, the Netherlands, Portugal) in granting civil and political rights to its Pacific subjects. This trend was reversed on the creation of the nuclear-testing facility on Moruroa and the nickel-mining boom in New Caledonia. But today Oceania as a whole has remained one of the least completely decolonized regions on the globe and the TOM (French Overseas Territories) are only a subset within a much larger cohort (Aldrich, p. 347).

The French state as arbiter and party in the local competition between natives and settlers: this is a major topic in both books and very well dealt with. And so is the companion topic of independence or secession, which over and over again has been championed by white communities whenever the Paris government was contemplating taxation in the colonies or any regulation protecting the native people, for independence had two different meanings and two conflicting sets of supporters. A case in point is what happened to all efforts by Pisani and their backlash in Noumea (1984-1985).

In a logical way, economic changes in the territories only reinforced the dependence of these islands on France and on French largess. Therefore, the more that bargaining power is enjoyed by every Tahitian or Kanak as individual consumers and workers, the less successful will they be in achieving independence. If the TOM refuse privileged relationships with Paris, that would mean the end of consumer society and of the welfare system existing in New Caledonia and French Polynesia. Such a prospect ironically provides comfort both to anti *-indépendantistes* and to supporters of French-sponsored independence. a

In assessing French colonialism, Aldrich rightly emphasizes that political and administrative centralism prevailing in French colonies and later in the TOM is not different anyway from the one prevailing in the metropole itself (p. 351). In my opinion, this is a most important point with regard to British and American readers. It will hopefully help them understand many of the

quandaries in which both the French government and the *indépendantistes* have been struggling for so long.

France's policy in the Pacific took little account of the neighbors of its territories. The French view of an exclusive relationship between Paris and its territories meant that the TOM existed in extreme isolation from other islands, which was conducive to a widespread image of racism and arrogant domination. This is a point well made by Aldrich (p. 358). But both writers insist with equal acumen that France was thus playing into the hands of all the Pacific states, which were only too glad to get at their disposal a "convenient villain" (Henningham) or a "scapegoat" (Aldrich) able to deflect feelings of frustration or anger from their own citizens. Such was the burden that French officials, politicians, and settlers foolishly fastened to the image of their country for a long time. After the Matignon Accord, however, this enduring policy was reversed and in the 1990s closer relations with Fiji, Australia, and New Zealand, together with aid packages given to the micro-states, have resulted in greatly improving the image of France and mollifying criticisms against nuclear testing and the situation in New Caledonia.

If one were to quibble over the congratulations these two books so evidently deserve, one would perhaps regret that both are taking French policies in the Pacific and their results too seriously, to the extent of turning them into a noble topic worthy of subtle and conscientious evaluation. After all, as each writer rightly remarks, it is a matter of relative insignificance, except when used as a weapon in domestic politicking in Paris, and the French public at large does not care at all for New Caledonia or French Polynesia. So, to regard the whole stuff as a masquerade may have been a sensible alternative approach to the topic. "Masquerade" does not necessarily mean a pleasant parlor game--it may be bloody as was the case with the bombing of the *Rainbow Warrior* (1985) or the massacre at Ouvéa (1988)--but more significantly the word could aptly convey ideas of the petty make-believe, shortsighted selfishness, and gross prejudice that have highlighted colonial history so often.