

In spite of the flowery prose by Fr Czuba and others about the “closure” of the UPNG programme (it is still struggling along), and praise for DWU stepping in take a handful of UPNG students, anybody intimately associated with journalism education in Papua New Guinea knows the facts.

UPNG’s former Vice-Chancellor Dr Rodney Hills, who hated the news media and anything related to it (ie journalism education and training at UPNG — see *PJR*, 5:1:114-124), did a “deal” with DWU in 1997 which was to scrap the UPNG programme and allow DWU to fill the vacuum.

Rather than “saving” UPNG, as some at DWU would have you believe, DWU played an opportunistic role in effectively “killing off” what had been previously the region’s largest and best journalism school.

What is all this about ethics, integrity and responsibility? Isn’t it about time that the PNG news media reported the truth about this unfortunate saga? The Ombudsman Commission and some media offices have documents to verify the truth, so why hasn’t it been exposed?

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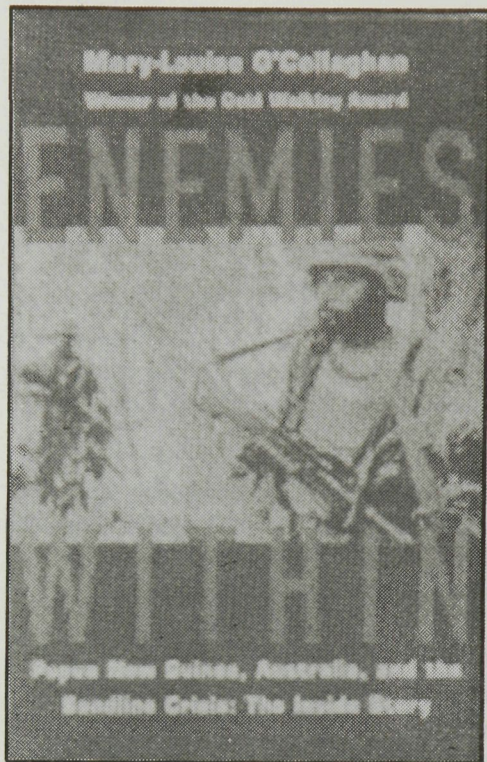
Sandline crisis thriller that fails to deliver

Enemies Within: Papua New Guinea, Australia, and the Sandline Crisis: The Inside Story, by Mary-Louise O’Callaghan. Sydney: Doubleday. 1999. 381 pp. ISBN 0-86424-786-3

THE PANGUNA copper and gold mine on Bougainville was one of the world’s biggest mines. Owned and operated by a subsidiary of Rio Tinto of Britain, the world’s largest mining transnational, it had been opened in 1972, over the strenuous objections of the Bougainvilleans.

The traditional landowners were appalled by the enormous environmental devastation, and the virtually zero level of royalties paid to them. Over the years they protested and filed huge damages claims. Finally, in the late 1980s, they started sabotaging the mine, Papua New Guinea’s biggest revenue earner.

The PNG military over-reacted and soon became bogged down in a losing war for Bougainvillean inde-



pendence, its very own Vietnam. The mine has been closed for more than a decade now. Francis Ona, the leader of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army, told *Time* (10 March 1997): “We truly believe that all of Bougainville is under threat of destruction by these foreign companies of mining.”

By 1996, the PNG government of Sir Julius Chan had secretly decided that its own brutal and undisciplined military was incapable of suppressing the rebellion, and contracted Sandline International, a shadowy corporation of African mercenaries commanded

by British officer hasbeens, to seize the mine and defeat the BRA.

In March 1997, the PNG military, headed by Brigadier General Jerry Singirok, demanded that the contract be cancelled, the mercenaries expelled, and the Prime Minister and his colleagues resign.

Instead, Chan sacked Singirok. The troops rebelled, backing their commander, and led a joint military/civilian blockade of Parliament which forced the resignation of Chan and others (he was among those defeated at the subsequent general election).

This book provides an extremely detailed account of those unprecedented events (as far as the regional media was concerned, it was the “East Timor” story of 1997).

According to this book, the worst thing about the detention of Sandline commander, Lieutenant Colonel Tim Spicer, by the PNG military, was that he missed the Hong Kong Rugby Sevens. Bad show!

Gold Medal Walkley winner Mary-Louise O’Callaghan was a journalist who exposed the crisis, the worst since PNG achieved independence in 1975. Her impeccable sources have served her well.

The book reads like a thriller — too much like one. It’s full of too much extraneous scene-setting detail, and it veers confusingly backwards and for-

wards. It is indisputably the inside story, but too much of that also. There's not enough of the outside story, the context.

It is descriptive, not analytical.

Don't read this book if you want to learn anything about Rio Tinto, one of the world's nastiest transnational corporations, and the owner of Comalco in New Zealand. Don't read it if you want to learn about the African crimes of Sandline, particularly in murderously seizing and exploiting the mineral riches of countries such as Angola and Sierra Leone.

Don't read it if you want to learn about how the major powers, such as the US and Britain, have aided and abetted the privatisation of war in countries from Africa to the Balkans (it's all about profits and "plausible deniability").

Unfortunately, it does not give us *The Big Picture*, to use the cliché so beloved of our "globalists". This is the New World Order. Well spoken thugs killing and bombing for hire, with a nice fat cheque and (literally) a gold mine as payment.

This use of mercenaries by transnational corporations, particularly mining transnationals, and their client governments, has become common in Africa, and is the logical development of corporate feudalism. By the 1990s, there were over 90 private armies ac-

tive in Africa.

To give one example — in January 1993, Canadian company Ranger Oil spent C\$30 million financing a "cleanup" operation in the Angolan petrochemical city of Soyo, by Executive Outcomes, a South African mercenary army ("Executive Incomes" might be a more appropriate name).

These products of apartheid operated on a simple maxim throughout Africa — *Harpers* (February 1997) quotes the relevant order in Sierra Leone as being "Kill everyone!". According to a "renowned strategist and war theoretician" (*The Press*, 27 February 1997): "Much of the day-to-day burden of defending society against the threat of low intensity conflict will be transferred to the booming security business and indeed the time may come when the organisations that comprise that business will, like the *condottieri* of old (mercenary armies led by military entrepreneurs) take over the state."

The whole thing was a textbook study in arrogance by public school-boy killers — from the childish machismo company name (ever since the Gulf War, military wet dreamers have talked of drawing "a line in the sand"), to the mentality of the mercenary commanders who must have watched too many repeats of "Dad's Army" and had obviously taken at face value Corporal Jones' mantra: "The fuzzy

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wuzzies don't like cold steel, they don't like it up 'em".

One of the more comical sequels to the whole squalid fiasco was to be found among the inventory of Sandline's arsenal seized by the Australians. It included several lawn mowers — which gives a whole new dimension to the long established British military tradition of mowing down the natives.

To their great surprise, it was the hired murderers who found their own lives in danger (very much so in Spicer's case), comprehensively surprised, routed and kicked out by Rausim Kwik, the military rebellion headed by Jerry Singirok.

To add insult to injury, they were routed by the very same PNG military which had caused so much of the Bougainville crisis in the first place. Nor had these military geniuses thought through their plan — if they had succeeded in capturing and reopening the Panguna mine, that would have been far from the end of the matter but simply a return to square one, with militant landowners determined to close it down again by any means, including war.

Nor had they considered the political ramifications — as it was, the Sandline crisis brought down the Chan Government and led to the extraordinary situation of the nation's politi-

cians being besieged in Parliament.

The region owes the people of Papua New Guinea a big vote of thanks — they rose and physically chucked out the mercenaries, forced the Government to back down, and voted out the politicians (including the PM) who were responsible.

The mercenaries fiasco provided the breakthrough to the present peace settlement on Bougainville. The people of one of the world's most "primitive" countries defeated the world's biggest mining company and its local agents.

And they did so with a minimum of bloodshed. Not one Cruise missile or smart bomb was required.

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