

1942 with the war in the Pacific and the invasion of Papua and New Guinea that Australia had always feared.

The presentation of the politics involved in disputes over the Native Labour Ordinances and the role of Papuans who were "not entirely powerless" (p. 7), despite the obvious inequities of the situation, is particularly even-handed and informative. The discussion of plantation products, the global market, taxes, duties, fees, freight costs, tariffs, trade agreements and marketing boards makes slow but engrossing reading and I was captured by these coalescing circumstances turning "the life of the white coconut grower...[into] one of constant struggle to make ends meet" to provide the "barest of 'civilised' livings" (p. 207). I would like to have known more of those individual "small" men and women who struggled to create a livelihood and raise a family in Papua and who numbered "among the peripheral casualties of the political, economic and cultural transformations of this century" (p. 3). This is but a minor quibble to an otherwise exceptionally well-researched and compellingly sympathetic account of an oft-neglected aspect of Papuan colonial history. Highly recommended.

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NAOMI M. MCPHERSON

WAR OF THE MINES: Cambodia, Landmines and the Impoverishment of a Nation. By Paul Davies. London: Pluto Press (Distributed in North America by Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado). 1994. xvii, 272 pp. (Figures, maps, photos, tables.) US\$79.95, cloth, ISBN 0-7453-0860-0; US\$24.95, paper, ISBN 0-7453-0859-7.

THE 1990s will be remembered for the moral paralysis in dealing with accelerating social threats from land mines. In recent years, the Canadian government has taken leadership in advocating a worldwide ban. But this is while landmines and components are still being manufactured in Canada. Recently, the United States has finally moved to support the concept of a ban while undermining Canadian leadership. *War of the Mines* cuts through the bickering and petty opportunism and is a disturbing and bleak portrayal of the situation in Cambodia. One part photoessay with beautiful black and white images, one part report, and one part manual, *War of the Mines* painstakingly documents the "human costs." The technical chapters on demining, prosthetics, and relevant international law provide useful reference material but the case study on Rattanak Mondul district, Battambang province, with its plunge from prosperity to poverty, is the most compelling. The sheer extent of the recent and increasing deaths and maiming from landmines, with extensive statistics listed in the appendices, are necessary, perhaps, but overwhelming.

It is in chapter 3, on Battambang province, that the fact of landmines as an emerging environmental problem, derived from part historic and part

contemporary forces, is best articulated. The chapter is worth review and citation in any kind of discussion of the synergies of the ecological, social, and economic costs of landmines. *War of the Mines* is full of technical solutions and people, though maimed, who remain hopeful. It would be indulgent to focus on the despair when so much needs to be quickly done to stop the spread of landmines and rid the lands from Cambodia to Afghanistan to Bosnia of today's legacy of international indifference and ineffectuality.

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GORDON BRENT INGRAM

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