

packaged, thanks to his excellent publishers) of an emotional and aesthetic bond forged between thousands of New Zealanders and a weapon of war.

Some flew the Spitfire in combat long ago with amazing skill and courage; others found it far too hot to handle. A few earned decorations, national fame, and a personal satisfaction never afterwards equalled; others found only an early grave, agonizing injuries or a long-lasting memory of failure. For many of us it is both a beautiful object and a symbol of victory over vile regimes in Europe and Asia.

The book contains hundreds of photographs, many unfamiliar, all clearly reproduced, some in colour, and accurately captioned. There are also maps, diagrams, cartoons, several lists (of everything you might wish to consult in the way of men, machines, locations, operations flown, victories, losses and survivals) as well as abbreviations, glossary, bibliography and index. It is, in short, a work of careful scholarship and not at all a glossy quickie of a kind with which aviation historians around the world are only too familiar. Morris has read the books, visited the archives, and interviewed as many as possible of the ever-dwindling band of wartime pilots and ground crews.

The first half of the book deals with World War II and offers a thorough account of 485 Squadron's record: about 200 New Zealanders served with that squadron, 20% of all those who flew a Spitfire (or the Seafire, its naval version) at least once. Stories about 485 and its motto — *Ka Whawhai Tonu (We Will Fight On)* — have often been told, but rarely in such detail, and never so accurately. New Zealanders who flew Spitfires with other squadrons receive fair attention — including those who served in Burma, India and Ceylon, far from the superior glamour (in the eyes of those safe on Mother Earth) of combat over Britain, North-west Europe and the Mediterranean.

Morris then turns to an entirely different story: that of the post-war survival of a handful of Spitfires. He traces the fortunes of those with a New Zealand connection in loving detail. No longer weapons, these machines have become a combination of revered icons, absorbing wrecks to reconstruct, expensive toys to fly, fascinating examples of ancient engineering technique, movie stars and centres of attraction, whether displayed in museums or mounted on plinths or alive and well at air shows. Unsurprisingly, the author loves Wanaka and all those who help to make it an irresistible magnet for boys and girls of all ages. But if you would like to see — and hear — one of these beautiful artifacts cavorting in the sky, do not miss any reasonable opportunity: of the 22,000 that were built (or, if you prefer, created) only about 50 remain airworthy. At present, of the five Spitfires in New Zealand, one can fly and that number is unlikely to rise above three.

A pilot deserves the last word. Flight Lieutenant — later Reverend — J. Norby King recalled what it was like to fly a Spitfire: 'I was dancing with a new and lovely, lively dancing partner. Waltzing in the clouds with Deanna Durbin.'

VINCENT ORANGE

*University of Canterbury*

*History of New Zealand and Its Inhabitants.* By Dom Felice Vaggioli. Translated by John Crockett. University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 2000. xxiii + 340 pp. NZ price: \$49.95. ISBN 1-877133-52-3.

IS THIS A DANGEROUS BOOK in the hands of the uninitiated historian? Written by an Italian Benedictine priest who worked in New Zealand from 1879 to 1887, it has all the hallmarks of nineteenth-century sectarian bigotry shaped by nationalism and religion. Vaggioli excoriates Protestants and their missionaries, British settlers and colonial

politicians. He combines anti-Semitism and attacks on the exploitative influence of Freemasonry as 'the infamous Jewish-masonic clique'. In contrast, Catholic missionaries are benign and benevolent and 'Catholicism is the only religion which exercises a civilizing effect on barbarians and savages'. Spanish Catholic colonizers (no critique of conquistadors) immediately built churches while British settlers built an inn or tavern in honour of Bacchus. Hongi Hika, the '*devout Anglican*' [sic] who sacked the Wesleyan Mission at Whangaroa, is compared to Henry VIII who destroyed monasteries and churches. The devil is responsible for using 'fanatical Protestants' to destroy Catholic and Protestant missions at Opotiki in 1865. Catholics who join the Hauhau are punished by 'the hand of God' for abandoning their faith.

Vaggioli's history, published in Italian in Italy in 1896, sees New Zealand history through lenses that clearly reflect the author's prejudices. Whether it transcends these, as Crockett claims, as a proto- 'bicultural history', is questionable. What is not in question, however, is the remarkably sympathetic pro-Maori, albeit often paternalistic insights which Vaggioli brings to his reading of nineteenth-century New Zealand and his considerable attention to Maori history. Describing the causes of the conflict and devastation brought by the wars of the 1860s, Vaggioli is explicit in blaming the settlers and colonial government and accusing them of violating Maori rights and having no intention of observing the Treaty of Waitangi. But while he appeals to the Treaty, he denounces the wicked deception of Protestant missionaries in gaining Maori adherence to it, with Henry Williams as 'the treaty's arch-manipulator'.

There is a scissors-and-paste dimension to the history as Vaggioli draws on Protestant historians like Lang, Thomson, Rusden and Taylor. Crockett has helpfully identified many of these sources. In using them, however, Vaggioli reconstructs the past so that while Rusden, for example, is 'Catholic missionaries' enemy and Protestantism's champion', he is quoted approvingly when he justifies Vaggioli's own pro-Maori interpretations.

What this translation lacks is the detailed critical editing which goes beyond the translator's introduction and Tom Brooking's brief essay on nineteenth-century visitors to New Zealand. Among Vaggioli's historical errors are: his frequent confusion of the 'London Missionary Society' with the 'Church Missionary Society'; Augustus Earle is quoted as visiting Catholic missionaries even though his visit to New Zealand was ten years before they arrived; John Whiteley appears as an 'Anglican minister' and later as 'a Wesleyan missionary'. Vaggioli's selective interpretation can be illustrated by his reference to the 'mendacious Hadfield', who blamed Catholics for Volkner's death, while Vaggioli is silent on Hadfield's protests over Waitara. Pompallier's administrative and financial incompetence is glossed over.

This book would provide a marvellous case study for a class studying the use of sources, issues of perspective and interpretation. It represents an alternative reading of our past which challenges readers to re-examine their own prejudices.

While the claim is made that this is the first English translation, sections of the book were translated by Fr Albert Merten SM, and extracts appeared monthly in the *Marist Messenger* between July 1944 and June 1946. Crockett is to be congratulated for providing a dynamic translation of a work which has been largely hidden from English readers. But let uninitiated readers beware, for they are entering contestable territory.

ALLAN K. DAVIDSON

*St John's College, Auckland*