

and real world examples and should be celebrated. It is clearly unique from other books documenting exhibitions.

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Twelve Days at Nuku Hiva: Russian Encounters and Mutiny in the South Pacific. By Elena Govor. University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 2010. 301pp. NZ price: \$89.95. ISBN 978-0-82483-368-8.

WHEN IT COMES TO STORIES of mutiny in the South Pacific, Elena Govor has some hard acts to follow. There's the *Bounty* story, of course, with a host of retellings from Lord Byron through to Greg Denning; there's Melville and Long Ghost aboard the *Lucy-Ann*; and Humphrey Bogart dementedly rattling those steel balls in the wardroom of the USS *Caine*, but who would have thought to associate mutinous irruptions with a commander as level-headed as Adam von Krusenstern in his Cook-inspired voyage of discovery? Certainly, history does not remember the first Russian circumnavigator that way. A noble statue of the admiral gazes over the Neva in St Petersburg; behind him, on postcards of that city, one is likely to see the tall ship that still bears his name, the elite training school of the Russian navy, bedecked with flags and pennants. Mutiny on the *Nadezhda* and the *Neva*? The jaw drops. It is as if DNA testing were to reveal a hitherto unnoticed gob of Yorkshire spit on James Cook's secret orders from the Admiralty.

Accounts of the 1803 expedition by Krusenstern, Lisiansky and Langsdorff have long been available in French, German and English translation, but a trove of unpublished journals and letters written in Russian has only recently been examined by researchers in that country. Here they become available in English for the first time. Interleaving new material with the 'official' journals, Govor builds a 12-day chronicle of the encounter between expedition members and the people of Nuku Hiva, expertly essaying such ethnographic topics as cannibalism and tattooing, the shipboard market for pigs and the shore market for iron hoops, the allure and meanings of cross-cultural copulation, all the while constructing a narrative of suspense whose denouement is Count Rezanov locked in his cabin and Krusenstern advising the authorities that he must request his own court-martial.

In telling her story, Govor has at her disposal a cast of characters as disputatiously complex as one would find in a dozen series of *Lost*. Krusenstern, along with the naturalists Langsdorff, Tilesius, and others in the officer/scientist class, were gentlemen of the Enlightenment. The scientists mostly came from German universities (Langsdorff spoke no Russian), while several of the more senior officers, like Krusenstern himself, were Europeanised Russians from the Baltic. This cadre of 'Westerners' had little in common with their rough compatriots from the heartland of Russia. In Löwenstern's journal, for example, the 'truly Russian' First Lieutenant Ratmanov attracts such epithets as 'uneducated, rude, conceited, quarrelsome, imperious, foul-mouthed', while in his journal the maligned lieutenant records with disgust that the ship has become a 'German synagogue'. Lisiansky, commanding the *Neva*, was neither quite of the Russian party (he had spent many years in the British Royal Navy) nor quite one of the Westerners. He was of the Bligh school when it came to discipline, but if we are looking for the vanity, petty tyrannies and toadying associated with Charles Laughton's portrayal of that character, the palm undoubtedly goes to Count Nikolai Rezanov — 'a vulgar, bawdy, hypocritical and vainglorious individual', according to one commentator; 'a foul mouthed . . . arrogant slave-driver', says another.

Rezanov and his party of officials joined the voyage after the initial planning stages,

once Tsar Alexander's personal interest had been aroused. A statesmanlike thought occurred to the monarch: why not combine a voyage of scientific discovery in the Pacific with a diplomatic mission to Japan? But there was a fatal ambiguity in the instructions Krusenstern and Rezanov separately received from their emperor. The Count believed himself in charge of the whole expedition and the wording of his instructions seem to prove it; Krusenstern, originator of the project, was not inclined to rate himself the Count's chauffeur, and conceded to Rezanov full charge of the diplomatic mission only. When Rezanov ordered his 'navigator' to call in at Madeira, Krusenstern refused; and from Brazil and every stop thence, mutual letters of protest and recrimination scorched their way back to Moscow. This was no hidden conflict; every person on board had an opinion about it. On the whole, the 'Westerners' were with Krusenstern and the 'Russians' with Rezanov. On Nuku Hiva, where the charge of ship-to-shore exchanges came even more ambiguously under the headings of either 'Imperial Diplomacy' or 'Voyage of Discovery', these explosively divergent interests and lines of authority would reach tinder point.

I must introduce other members of the cast. Five shipwrecked Japanese seamen came along as passengers in Rezanov's entourage; once repatriated, they were questioned by a special commission, and a report, 'Strange Stories from the Hidden Sea', with illustrations, forms a hitherto unsuspected part of Govor's archive. A Russian orthodox priest, Father Gideon, was in Rezanov's retinue; to the annoyance of the officers, overnight stays by local women were prohibited aboard the priest's ship, the *Neva* — a galling exclusion when, over on the *Nadezhda*, the hypocritical Rezanov had no qualms about enjoying their favours. My own favourite expedition member is Count Fedor Tolstoy, cousin of the novelist, who kept an undisciplined macaque as a pet, and returned from the Marquesas with extensive body tattoos designed to show the genitals to flourishing advantage. He became friendly with Joseph Kabris, the French sailor, also tattooed, who was fully acculturated into island ways, and the *bête noir* of that enterprising English beachcomber Edward Robarts, who negotiated most arrangements between ship and island. Robarts's *Marquesan Journal* is well known; it offers a key point of triangulation for the expedition documents and vice versa. Finally, of course, there are the people of the land. Portraits of these anonymous handsome figures decorate many volumes of Pacific history. One of the most exciting things about the new material from Russia is that it allows a more close-grained reading of these images. Govor puts names to most faces and illuminates the circumstances in which these representations were made.

As a contribution to the history of cross-cultural encounter in the Pacific, specialists will be thankful for an enlarged archive. Govor also gives us a fuller picture of the understanding of taboo, markets, sexuality and so forth that one finds elaborated in ethnohistories by Greg Dening, Nicholas Thomas, Bronwen Douglas, Lee Wallace and others — hers is not a revisionist's history, and it did not need to be. As for actual reservations, I have two. Govor's own first language is Russian, and while I would like to be able to say that the author always writes as winningly as she does when speaking in a personal voice about her travels in the Marquesas, the book as a whole is rather lumpily written. Her history may be 'polyphonic', but her handling of all those multiple perspectives lacks melodic and rhythmic invention — though most readers will find that the intrinsic interest of the work makes up for its stylistic defects. More puzzling, for this reader, is the emphasis on mutiny. Day eight on Nuku Hiva ends, not with the kind of stand-off that has Bligh in the longboat and Fletcher Christian muttering, 'I am in hell, Sir! I am in Hell!', but only with slammed doors, petulance and a wardroom meeting at which the assembled naval officers back Krusenstern's interpretation of his instructions. It is the escalation of a fractious voyage into a nasty spat, one that might conceivably have had more serious ramifications, but was unsurprisingly swept under the carpet on their return. Mutiny is only Rezanov's word for Krusenstern's actions; the

latter would have grounds to feel libelled. But I am sure Govor is right to suggest that the ongoing unpleasantness aboard the *Nadezdha* and the *Neva* was nudged into crisis by the Marquesan sojourn. Not, as Govor suggests, because in 'coming to this island to observe savages, they had discovered the savage within themselves', but rather because bids for prestige and legitimacy on both sides of the beach became both more contestable and more critical in the moment of encounter. I wonder what the late Greg Denning would make of these additions to an island history he had explored so often and so well? I expect, under all these murmurs of mutiny, he would have discerned the ambiguity of authority and heard from afar Tsar Alexander's bad language.

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A Great New Zealand Prime Minister? Reappraising William Ferguson Massey. Edited by James Watson and Lachy Paterson. Otago University Press, Dunedin, 2011. 172pp. NZ price: \$40. ISBN: 9781877578076.

SINCE COLLECTIONS OF CONFERENCE PAPERS are often a disappointment, it is a real pleasure to review a volume that is coherent, well organised and thought provoking. Drawing on papers delivered at the 2006 Massey@Massey conference held at Massey University in Palmerston North, *A Great New Zealand Prime Minister?* presents nine essays that examine different aspects of the life and political career of William Ferguson Massey. Each of these contributions is different in focus and approach, but together they provide a convincing case for a thorough reconsideration of the way that historians have judged Bill Massey.

The opening chapter by Erik Olssen makes a major contribution to the book's success. Olssen examines his own interest in, and engagement with, Massey and charts the ways his views of the former New Zealand prime minister and his government have evolved over the course of his academic career. Interestingly, Olssen uses his knowledge of US history to place Massey in a wider historical context, suggesting that 'only in a society with a political culture as radical as New Zealand's ... could Massey and his government be described as conservative, let alone reactionary' (p.15). In place of the commonly held image of a close-minded and intolerant conservative, Massey emerges from Olssen's survey as a more humane, far-sighted and progressive political leader, whose significance domestically and on the international stage ought to be better appreciated. Indeed, for Olssen, Massey's economic and social policies during World War I foreshadowed a range of later Labour government measures. Linda Bryder's insightful chapter on Christina Massey lends additional weight to this appreciation, observing that in its support for the Plunket Society, the Reform government was in fact 'sponsoring a universal health and welfare system' for new mothers (p.45).

Subsequent essays in this volume tend to confirm Olssen's positive evaluation of Massey's achievements and support the case for a thorough reconsideration of his place in New Zealand historiography. Miles Fairburn and S.J. Haslett examine Massey's electoral achievements and conclude that the Reform Party enjoyed more widespread support than conventionally acknowledged: 'the vote for Massey in 1911 and 1914 was remarkably broad-spectrum, and it did not reflect the acute divisions that supposedly characterized the period' (p.74). Likewise, Rory Sweetman shows that Massey's political career and, more specifically, his attitudes towards Roman Catholics defy the simplistic assertions of religious bigotry that have sometimes been made on account of his association with the Orange Order. Massey's own sense of identity and engagement with issues of national