

Aborigines Resist Genocide

Report from Australia

Lynne Clive (Marilynn Rashid)

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It is small wonder that most Americans are not the least big cognizant of the plight of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia; the mainstream press here in the United States does not even recognize the struggles of its own indigenous population. From our perspective, the systematic statist degradation of primitive and indigenous peoples and their spirited refusal to submit to the powers of progress are central to the complex question of social domination all over the world.

Over the past several months we have received a wealth of material on the Aborigines from a long time subscriber in Tasmania, Australia. He writes, "The world should learn that in one of the most affluent countries in the world, the indigenous population is being starved, hunted, raped, beaten, jailed, medically neglected, and murdered. The world should learn that active genocide is being practiced in Australia against the Aboriginal population. It has not lessened over the years. It has become subtly institutionalized. Genocide is alive and well in Australia."

It is easy for us to find parallels to such flagrant human atrocity in the national experience of the U.S. Native Americans and blacks have been the victims of similar genocidal tactics. The process begins with blatant, direct acts of horrifying violence and discrimination and then slowly legitimates itself in the name of progress and social reform. Such peoples may perhaps eventually be "educated," "integrated," "assimilated," but only after their spirits have been broken and their cultures denigrated and destroyed.

There still remains much spirit and cultural strength in the Australian Aborigines, and this in the face of overwhelming threats to their land and their way of life. Their support-group newsletters are overflowing with accounts of struggles to prohibit the building of power plants, communications towers, roads, freeways, bridges, tourist resorts, dams, uranium-mining, strip-mining—and much of this on sacred Aboriginal land. The list goes on and on.

In those few situations where the Aborigines succeed in their battles to protect their land, it's apparent that for the most part, they have merely slowed down the process of occupation and destruction. Governments always change their minds later on, break their treaties, lift their bans or freezes on mining and development projects, reverse their earlier decisions; the onslaught continues and the threat is always there.

One significant victory took place this past summer on the island of Tasmania where environmentalists (called "greenies" in Australia) banded together with Aborigines in their fight against a massive dam project involving the Franklin and Gordon Rivers and sponsored by the Tasmanian Hydro-Electric Commission. This venture would have flooded one of Australia's last untouched regions, destroying rain forests, wild life, rivers, wild lands of unspeakable beauty, and sacred Aboriginal caves, some of which date back to the Ice Age.

The Australian government took pains to note that the decision to halt the project was not made in order to bolster or give credence to Aboriginal rights issues on Tasmania; the Tasmanian government maintains that the Aboriginal race is extinct on the island because the last full blood Aborigine, who had survived countless horrendous massacres of her people, died in 1876.

Such preposterous claims are used by the government to deny land rights to Tasmania's widespread mixed aboriginal population. As always, the Aborigines and the greenies must be cautious with their euphoria. Our friend

writes us that the decision to halt construction of the dam, “may only mean a two year delay... as the Labour Party will be tipped out of power in a federal election due about this time, and with a Liberal Party in federal government, the dam building will be resumed.”

On a myriad of levels, the Aborigines are confronted with the maniacal threat of government sanctioned annihilation. Examples abound. As a result of British atomic testing in the ‘50s on nearby islands and the widespread mining of uranium that is going on today, many Aborigines have been subjected to dangerous levels of radiation contamination.

Recent studies have confirmed that the general health of the Aboriginal population is extremely poor due above all to the horribly impoverished conditions under which they have been forced to live. One study stated that death rates from infectious diseases on some Aboriginal reserves in Queensland were 200 to 300 times higher than in the white population of the state.

Aboriginal children are four times more likely than white children to die before the age of one, twenty times more likely to have a chronic respiratory tract infection. Among a list of other maladies, Aboriginal children are more likely to suffer from malnutrition, parasitic infestations, anemia, pneumonia, influenza and measles. As adults they are thirteen times more likely to be diabetic, more likely to contract TB, VD, heart disease, hypertension. Alcoholism and morbid obesity also account for major health problems among the Aborigines.

These studies state that before the arrival of Captain Cook (and the invasion by Western civilization), even though infant mortality may have been high, Aborigines were well nourished and maintained a very healthy existence. The studies emphasize that “in the institutional environments of our western culture, the effects of dislocation on the physical and psychic health of Aborigines are probably at their worst.” (Aboriginal Land Rights Support Group Newsletter, August 1983)

It is clear that Aborigines have few if any rights at all and that they are beset with discrimination at every turn. Over a year ago it was reported in Australian newspapers that Australian Aborigines represent a higher proportion of jail inmates than any other group in the world. Aborigines are now only 3% of Australia’s population and yet they account for 30% of its prisoners. According to one Australian newspaper, “In Western Australia Aborigines were imprisoned at a rate of 1,300 per 100,000 as against 81 per 100,000 of other races.” (*The Examiner*, Hobart, Tasmania).

These facts (and we could continue to enumerate them) make it blatantly clear that an entire race of people is being methodically wiped out by the “legitimate,” organized tactics of a typically cold and unconscionable state machinery. Our friend stresses that, “The rest of the world must learn how bad it really is to be black and live in Australia. The Australian government and the Australian people are party to and active in a ‘final solution’ for Black Australia—those that cannot or will not be integrated are on a silent but deadly death list.”

Here are several addresses of support groups which publish information on the struggles of the Aborigines:

The Aboriginal Land Rights Support Group, Box 248, Strawberry Hill 2012, Australia;

Black Nation, P.O. Box 173 West End, Queensland 4101, Australia;

The Pacific Concerns Resource Center, P.O. Box 27692, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA; Tasmanian Wilderness Society, 130 Davey Street, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia;

Campaign Against Racial Exploitation, P.O. Box 51, Kensington Park S.A., 5078, Australia.

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