

Bits of the World in Brief

Fifth Estate Collective

1988

It is two hundred years since the European invasion of Australia. The resistance that was begun then by Australian Aborigines continues today. While the presentation of a sanitized version of history takes place on the TV screens of the nation, the original inhabitants of the continent have declared 1988 a Year of Mourning and Commitment to Struggle.

The Australia Day celebrations on January 26 provided Aborigines and their supporters with an opportunity to march through the streets of Sydney, the country's largest city and site of original white settlement. Approximately 20,000 Aborigines and their supporters, led by tribal people from the Northern Territory, marched through the city center while ships, in a re-enactment of the arrival of the first white settlers, entered the harbour.

Earlier in the day, a smaller march of 1,000 people evaded police to arrive at a vantage point on the harbour where heckling and stone throwing against the reenactment fleet, police boats and arrogant yuppie spectator craft took place. Strangely, white spectators on the shore nearby did not noticeably object to this display of defiance even when Prince Charles and Lady Di were booed and jeered.

Aboriginal opposition was also attracted to the opening of the new Federal Parliament building (a monument to extravagance) in Canberra on May 9th, and the World Expo '88 to be held in Brisbane from April 30 to October 30. Expo is being presented as the major event of the white bicentenary and is taking place in the most racist state in the country.

Expo '88 is a classic land swindle. The government is hoping to attract investment and tourism to pump up a failing economy and when it's all over flog the land off to their rich pig mates. The Expo site is in a "run down" riverside, inner-city area that has traditionally housed working class people, migrants and Aborigines, in particular.

Indeed, the boundary of the site in South Brisbane is an ancient gathering point for the South East Queensland tribes. The racist Queensland government has threatened to put anti-Expo Aboriginal activists in the "Black Hole," the below ground detention unit at Brisbane's Bogga Boad Jail.

Most white Australians are largely unaware of their own history—the mass murder and land theft that has made Australia what it is today, an apparently egalitarian society, that is, in fact, deeply divided. There was plenty of land for the early settlers because the blacks were not considered human, and the land declared "terra nullis."

A significant proportion of the Aboriginal population died as a result of the invasion. Outright slaughter, poisoning of waterholes and food, infected blankets, starvation, the introduction of alcohol and European diseases, torture, imprisonment and slavery, enforced christianity—all of the sickeningly familiar techniques of colonialism, but somehow unrecognized as such by the white population. In Tasmania, a large island in the south, the genocide was so severe that the state government does not officially recognize Aborigines as existing today.

The bicentennial of white Australia has seen another resurgence of Aboriginal activism. These are a continuation of the guerrilla wars fought by the Aborigines in the last century through the strikes on cattle stations in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s and into the land rights movement of the 1970s. The nationalist celebration comes at a time when conditions of Aboriginal life are at an all time low.

As we were assured by a participant in Australia's small but active anarchist movement, "You can be sure resistance exists in the pancreas of the beast."

—Report by West End Anarchists, Box 332, North Quay 4002, Queensland, Australia.

Ofir Kassif, a 23-year-old reservist with the Israeli army, recently got 28 days in a military jail for refusing a posting in the Gaza Strip. Kassif was one of 250 reservists, including numerous officers, who signed a joint letter sponsored by Yesh Gvul, the Israeli military resisters group, proclaiming the signatories' refusal to take a hand in suppressing the current Palestinian insurgency.

As Palestinian protests are met with increasingly violent repression, growing numbers of Israeli soldiers face a choice between obedience to the letter of military law, and obedience to their own conscience; between following orders they find morally, politically and legally repugnant—or defiance, with all the consequences.

Five years ago, the Lebanon war created a similar dilemma, and numerous Israeli soldiers declined to take part in the campaign. Of the hundreds of reservists who refused duty in Lebanon, at least 150 served jail terms. Their sacrifice was not in vain: the growing unrest within the army was a major factor in inducing the Israeli government ultimately to pull its troops out of Lebanon.

The force behind the Lebanon "refuseniks" was Yesh Gvul. Now, as Israeli soldiers again face the agonizing choice entailed by their duties in the occupied territories, Yesh Gvul is once more called upon to provide the moral and material support so vital to those who heed the voice of conscience. The assistance provided is twofold:

—financial aid to the families of servicemen imprisoned for refusing duty on grounds of principle;

—moral backing in the form of a campaign of public protest to denounce the "iron fist" policy against the Palestinian population.

For both purposes, Yesh Gvul is in urgent need of assistance, specifically:

Messages of support for the "refuseniks"—to be sent to the nearest Israeli diplomatic mission, with a copy to Yesh Gvul;

Money! There is an urgent need for funds to pursue a campaign of public protests, to include publication of lists of reservists committed to resisting participation in the current wave of repression.

Yesh Gvul, P.O. Box 6953, Jerusalem 91068, Israel or P.O. Box 4172, Tel Aviv, Israel

The Australian Bicentennial celebration turned bloody May 26 with the announcement of official plans to slaughter nearly 2 million kangaroos for profit in Queensland, the nation's largest state and the mainstay of the kangaroo industry.

The Queensland quota of 1.74 million animals boosts the total approved kill to 2,949,800 kangaroos for all of Australia, an increase of 145,400 over the 1987 figure. It is estimated that an additional one million kangaroos are slaughtered outside the commercial quota for "damage mitigation"—alleged competition with domestic livestock.

This unique symbol of Australia's heritage will be ground into pet food, made into handbags, sewn into sports shoes, and used in stuffed toys.

—report from: Greenpeace, 1436 U St., NW, Washington DC 20009.

JUST ARRIVED in our bookstore: *Whitewash: Australia's Bicentenary: Another History*, published by the Melbourne Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation, \$1.50 (U.S.). Explains more fully what is at issue for Australia's original people and what the European invasion has done to them.

Two California-based groups, the Borderlands Anti-Authoritarian Community and the Survival Network (the latter which publishes the Bayou La Rose newspaper), are calling for protests of the planned beatification (the first step toward "sainthood") of Father Juniper Serra.

The 18th century Franciscan priest was largely responsible for the conquest and colonization of California and the resulting genocide and enslavement of the California native Americans. Serra established the first of nine missions in San Diego in 1769 and it was with this network that the systematic destruction of the Indian culture proceeded. A spokesman for the Diocese of Monterey, California unwittingly expressed approval for the racism and genocide the Catholic Church was responsible for when he referred recently to Serra as "California's first citizen" as if rich indigenous cultures never existed prior to the arrival of the European invasion.

The anti-authoritarians who are planning the protest write, "We will not passively sit by while the Catholic Church makes a saint of a mass murderer)" If you would like to assist in the protest, contact: Truth About Serra Campaign, Box 2576, San Diego CA 92112. Bayou La Rose, (a paper committed to the defense of Native Americans,

the environment and political prisoners), as well as the other groups mentioned above may be reached at the same address.

Actions against the Empire have taken on a harder edge as Spring turned into Summer. The frustration of seeing no progress or even regression emboldens people to act more aggressively in voicing their desires and to take more personal risks.

In the wake of U.S. moves to bolster its military presence in Honduras in March, demonstrations were held in cities across the country. In San Francisco and Minneapolis in particular, people refused to stay within the parameters of “legal” protests set by the courts and police.

A rally at the San Francisco Federal Building spilled out into the street as people blocked traffic. In Minneapolis, a coalition of diverse groups including the Revolutionary Anarchist Bowling League (RABL) occupied the busy intersection of Hennipen and Lake streets on March 17 and declared it a liberated zone. Demonstrators cleared the intersection of police by bombarding their cars with paint bombs and attempting to flip them over.

They then defended themselves against police assault by constructing barricades of bus benches, newspaper boxes, and burning dumpsters. Later, as the cold set in, the demonstrators dispersed into surrounding neighborhoods with only three arrests being made.

The following day, demonstrators again occupied the intersection, then marched on a nearby Armed Forces Recruiting Station and attacked it with eggs, rocks and a bowling ball (“Let’s go bowling!”).

After a weekend of organizing, more actions were held the following week. Police reaction also rose steadily. On Monday, March 21, riot cops broke up a spirited demonstration at the Federal Building with boots, clubs and mace. They used dogs and smashed cameras. It is clear the Empire will not relinquish any of its control without a fight.



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