

THE REAL BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA

DEFENDING AUSTRALIA FROM THE PINK PERIL

{From a lecture given in Australian History III, Australian National University, July 1973, printed in *Woroni* and then in *National U.*}

In this lecture I want to lead you away from the notion of the Aborigine as a passive recipient of history, as no more than a victim. Instead, we shall recognise the Aborigine as an active agent in European history since first contact.

There has been some improvement in historical writing about Aborigines during the last five years. Books such as C.D. Rowley's *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society* and Peter Biskup's *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, are fine examples. The Aborigine in Australian history is no longer entirely ignored. They are not actually fitted into the mainstream and so remain an interesting sidelight. But they are there. Despite this improvement, we have a long way to go.

If it is true that Aborigines are back in history courses, it is equally true they are there under sufferance, and most usually only as victims. They are seen as people to whom things happen, as people for whom we should feel sorry, as a people who need defending and for whom excuses must be found.

This condescension manifests itself in two principal ways. First, there are those who set out to demonstrate how badly Europeans treated the Aborigines. This is not a difficult task since there is a superabundance of evidence, much of it in official papers.

Secondly, there are those writers who, whenever faced with a piece of violence carried out by the blacks dig around in search of a piece of white provocation.

It is time to stop both these approaches.

In this lecture I shall turn the whole business on its head to look at the Aborigines as Australian patriots, fighting a justifiable war of resistance against the European invaders of their homelands.

Now, that is easy enough to say. But it is not very easy to 'think'. It is not easy for a European to think himself through into this position. While I was researching this lecture I spent three days hoping I would not come across any more accounts of Aborigines killing white babies. It was not until the fourth day that I could accept the fact that killing babies was 'a good thing'. What are the alternatives? Should the Aborigine have left them to die after killing the parents? Should they waited for them to grow up and then kill them?

This immoral squeamishness is the least of the problems facing anyone, black or white, who wants to write the history of the Australian Aborigine as an actor and freedom fighter.

Before presenting a short history of Australia from the viewpoint of Aborigines defending their country against an invader, I need to spotlight several serious inadequacies in the account.

First, there is the question as to whether 'history' itself is appropriate to the retelling of the life and actions of people who did not operate on our timescale. I mention this as a serious objection to the way in which I shall present the material I have brought together. The way in which the information is organised in terms of the time-scale is directly connected to another major problem which will have to be faced by historians dealing with Aborigines. I have arranged the material in terms of the Gregorian calendar because that is the way the people who left written records organised their materials. Because the Aborigines did not leave any records of their responses or their plans of campaign, I have to rely on snippets from their enemies.

Two more self-criticisms relate to the way in which I have written up the data I have found. I make virtually no distinction between tribes. I proceed on the racist assumption

that all Aborigines are the same. All historians continue to write in this manner because we pay no attention to anthropology or pre-history. In this connection it is worth reflecting upon the following: how many Aboriginal tribes can you name? And how many Amer-Indian tribes can you give?

The last of my self-destructing objections is that I have been guilty of what Claude Levi-Strauss would describe as 'primitive thinking'. I have uncovered a body of new data and to interpret them I have merely stood the old interpretation on its head. No native would be so unsubtle. But like most twentieth-century middle-class Europeans I am a long way from the art required to think in complex, fluid, dialectical ways. My mind has been reduced to a railway track and it takes me a very long time to see what is obvious to a savage.

I should make one further disclaimer. It would be untrue to suggest that I am the first person to have thought of writing about the Aborigine in this way. An amateur historian in Queensland in 1959 began an article on the Black war in that colony by describing one incident as 'The first place at which the Australian native struck a blow in the defence of his country.' But after spending twenty pages detailing the continuance of this defence he concluded: 'The inborn savage instinct of the black to attack a stranger has been responsible for many deaths of settlers ...'

Yet most scholars have managed not to think about the war at all. In 1947, Professor E.P. Elkin proclaimed that 'unlike the Maoris of New Zealand, they did not think of fighting for their country.' Having said this he immediately proceeds to the following:

Between 1842 and 1844, however, there seemed to be an uprising of Aborigines from Port Phillip on the south to Wide Bay in south-eastern Queensland. Incidents occurred along the frontier with such frequency that observers thought they must be planned.

What has happened is that Elkin was so full of the old notion that Aborigines did not fight for their country that he cannot perceive the importance of the evidence he produces.

One of the hoariest arguments is that the Aborigines would have obtained land rights if they fought for their land. This claim ignores the fact that wherever they did fight, all they got was to be exterminated. It is also another example of an argument which shifts the responsibility for suffering onto the victim.

At last, it is time to begin to describe the campaign of defence.

The struggle for the liberation of Australia

In order to defend Australia, it was necessary to scare of the enemy's advance scouts. The first European was Jansz in 1606 and at least one and possibly nine of his men were killed in the first blow struck for Australia's independence. Seventeen years later, another Dutchman, Carstensz, was forced to withdraw when 200 local troops attacked his landing party in North Queensland.

The pirate Dampier was hounded away on both his voyages in 1688 and again in 1699. So ashamed was he by his retreat that he attempted to conceal his own fears by slanders against his conquerors. The expedition of the English invaders under Cook was subject to assault by fire when their vessel was being repaired. The use of fire was to be an important weapon in the arsenal of the Australians. It could be used against flocks of sheep, against crops, against houses, and against families without endangering the lives of the freedom fighters.

Similar tactics were employed against the agents of aggression when they proceeded overland. In this aspect of the campaign, various stratagems were employed. Frequently, the defenders would offer themselves as guides and lead the invaders into areas where their incompetence would soon seal their fate. This was how Leichhardt was defeated. More usually, straying scouts would be speared as occurred with Oxley in 1818, Eyre in 1841, Gilbert in 1845, Kennedy in 1848 and Giles in 1873. Harassing tactics were

employed to slow down the enemy's advance as in the case of Mitchell who was so distraught that he built a fortress to protect himself.

But before these scouts appeared there was a long period in which the invaders huddled around Port Jackson and waited for ships to bring them supplies so that they could survive. They were not robust and many of them died. Moreover, they had little idea how to hunt or gather food, They could not fish effectively and they were not very skilled at their own activities of raising crops.

The resistance in the Port Jackson area was led by the great warrior, Pemulwoy. In the 1790s, his name struck fear into the hearts of the invaders and he killed several of them himself. In 1797, he led a magnificent raid on the Toongabbie outpost and attacked the punitive party sent out to capture him. He was captured but managed to escape. In 1802, he was shot. The invaders showed their barbarous natures, as well as how much they feared him, by pickling his head and sending it to Sir Joseph Banks in London. The resistance movement was carried forward by Pemulwoy's son, Tedbury, who led attacks as late as 1809.

The White War - Tasmania

For the first forty years, the main battles were waged in Tasmania. These commenced in 1804 immediately the Europeans appeared. Cattle were systematically speared and in 1807 a party from the white camp on the Derwent was driven back to its base and heavy casualties inflicted. This limited skirmishing continued into the early 1820s when a Port Jackson patriot, known to the invaders as Mosquito, was transported to Van Diemen's Land. In a few months of his arrival, Mosquito had performed two invaluable services. First, he had organised a group of demoralized Tasmanians who were living by begging and prostitution into a formidable fighting force which then conducted a series of brilliantly executed raids.

He was able to achieve this because of his second great accomplishment. From his acquaintance with the invaders at Sydney, he had learnt that as soon as their muskets had been fired, they were helpless until they reloaded. Mosquito was able to take advantage of his tactical information in the months of his campaign. He had demonstrated that weapons do not mean everything and that a disciplined and well-led force of the people can always find new means of defeating their enemies, Mosquito was captured through the treachery of a Quisling known as Tegg. Tegg had been promised a boat if he betrayed his countryman but when he kept his part of the deal, the whites once more demonstrated their treacherous natures by refusing to keep theirs.

As the 1820s proceeded, the lessons that Mosquito had taught were improved upon and tactics devised for wearing down the invader. 'Decoys were used, often women who led parties of white men into carefully laid ambushes. Attacks were feigned on insignificant targets to draw off men from neighbouring properties and leave their own premises exposed for plunder'. New leaders emerged, including 'Black Tom' Birch who was described by a Hobart newspaper as a 'civil or internal rebel'. Another leader was Mon Buillietta, the chief of the Big River tribe. A report to the British Colonial Secretary described him as 'a splendid and much feared warrior, he displayed the characteristics of an extreme nationalist. His exploits were recorded in the songs of several tribes ... Tribal chronicles recorded Mon Buillietta's hatred of the white race and his pledge to 'kill every white man and soldier' and regain tribal territories.

Fire was used extensively throughout 1827 as a particularly potent weapon against the increasing number of sheep and cattle. The next year's fighting was the most intensive and extensive so far. A different Hobart newspaper deplored that the sons of the greatest Empire in the world' having beaten the fine armies of France, were now being held to ransom by a handful of 'black barbarians'. In many areas, the invading farmers were forced to surrender their holdings because of continual harassment. There was a slight let-up

during the winter but a Spring Offensive was launched with such good effect that the British Governor told his superiors that there was a plan 'to destroy, without distinction of sex or age, all the whites who should fall within their power.'

So desperate had the Governor become that he proclaimed Martial Law and promised a reign of Terror. These measures availed him little and in 1830 he asked for a further detachment of troops and for the immediate transportation of 2,000 convicts. In the 1820s, the local forces had lost approximately 100 troops in battle while the invaders had lost more than twice that number. It was for this reason that they decided upon their futile Black Line which cost them well in excess of £30,000 and netted two local people – an old man and a child. Some further indication of the success of the resistance movement at this time can be gained from the comment in the *Hobart Town Courier* early in 1838 by which time the remaining Tasmanians had been deported to islands in Bass Strait. The paper commented that as a result of this deportation

The large tracts of pasture which have been so long deserted owing to their murderous attacks on the shepherds and the stock-huts will now be available.

Although ultimately vanquished by their ruthless opponents, the Tasmanians waged a long and heroic struggle for their homeland and thereby pointed the way to the strenuous resistance that confronted the Europeans as they moved northwards and further inland throughout the following hundred years.

1840s: general uprising

We have already noted that Elkin referred to a massive struggle in the early 1840s. In fact, this uprising was only a highlight of campaigns waged for over twenty years in the south-eastern corner of the mainland. In this protracted warfare, the patriots directed much of their attention towards the destruction of the flocks of sheep, correctly realising that in this manner they would hurt their enemies much more than if they killed only their shepherds.

A few sheep were killed for food but hundreds of thousands were killed as part of an economic war. For example, in the Clarence River district of New South Wales, William Forster and Gregory Blaxland were driven out by this tactic. Further inland around Armidale, the insurgents took advantage of the mountainous terrain to conceal sheep until they could be driven over cliffs.

One of the most spectacular of these manoeuvres occurred near the border between New South Wales and South Australia. On 16 April 1841, a party of Overlanders were attacked and dispersed by several hundred Australians who drove off some 5,000 sheep. When the news reached Adelaide, a punitive expedition was sent out but failed to find any trace of the sheep or of their captors. A second party set out early in May; this party was more successful in that they met up with their adversaries – but they were less fortunate in that they were driven away by them. Towards the end of May, a third party set out with nearly seventy men. They followed a number of false leads planted on them by the local population until they stumbled upon another party of Overlanders who had been attacked, as well as upon the carcasses of 2,000 sheep that had been speared systematically. The party buried the four dead whites from the second party of overlanders and returned empty-handed to Adelaide. The bitter ashes of defeat can be seen in the report of their leader:

The cruel tribe we are now surrounded by are very numerous, and have doubtless become emboldened by having defeated three successive parties of Europeans, and having escaped punishment by any detachments.

A fourth and final punitive expedition did shoot more than fifty of the original warriors but, as the *Adelaide Register* pointed out on 11 September 1841:

It is clear, however, on the surface that no party can for the present pass safely from New South Wales territory into South Australia unless sufficiently numerous and well-armed.

To maintain the vital overland link with New South Wales, the Governor sent Edward John Eyre to establish a guard-house eighty-five miles from Adelaide.

Another area of constant conflict was the Eyre Peninsula. Upwards of thirty Europeans were killed there and, in the 1840s, several would-be pastoralists were driven out of the district entirely. Even the so-called protector of Aborigines abandoned his farm and moved into town. When the military commander visited the area he described it as a deserted place, more than half the houses have been abandoned, and the remainder are barricaded to protect the occupants against the attacks of the natives. The local defenders had taken full advantage of the isolation of the settlement to wreck punishment, as would their countrymen in the entire north of Australia for at least a further hundred years.

Queensland

When the Queensland government held an inquiry into the success of its invasion in 1861, it was estimated that in the preceding twenty years, two hundred and fifty whites had been killed in the colony. This total was far from the complete figure since in this part of the continent because heavy fighting had been going on from the first encroachments in 1824 and continued well into the twentieth century. Indeed, the first settlement at Redcliffe was shifted of the ferocity of the attacks made by the local forces. In the south-west corner, the tribes co-ordinated their strategies at the triennial Bunya Festivals. They also planned each particular attack as can be seen from the assault in October 1857 at Hornet Bank Station when eleven whites were killed. Shortly before this attack, their troops had been observed in what was assumed to be a corroboree. Later, it was recognised as a training exercise. The resistance in the far west continued and was marked by spectacular events such as the capture of the township of Gilberton in 1874.

The attacks around Brisbane persisted. In the late 1840s and early 1850s they became associated with the names of Dundalli and Milbong Jemmy, both of whom were executed in 1855. Dundalli made an appeal to his countrymen from the scaffold to avenge his death by keeping up the struggle. As a punishment for this call, his hanging was bungled and he slowly strangled. As had occurred in South Australia, the government found it necessary to establish a fort at Helidon to protect its people travelling to and from the Darling Downs.

Probably the fiercest resistance was maintained in North Queensland and it was particularly successful against the incursion of gold-miners in the 1880s on their way to the Palmer River fields. The terrain was ideal for guerrilla warfare. A favourite tactic was to stampede a horse team at a particularly difficult spot on the track. In some parts of the far north, there was a virtual stand-off by the Europeans until the second world war. The history of the Anglican Church in North Queensland reported that, as late as 1926, their missionaries had not been able to succeed with what it referred to 'as the "still war-like" natives of the Kokoberra tribe. The actual number of invaders killed is not known but in the 1860s, it was estimated to be one in ten of all those who ventured into the outback. Certainly, there was an intense resistance for several decades with a large number of the tactical encounters being won by the Aborigines who forced back the frontier in several places for considerable periods of time.

Although the history books have tended to leave Aborigines out after 1900, this bias does not mean that the war of resistance had ended by then. In the Northern Territory and in the north of Western Australia, clashes continued into the 1930s. Many of these have become known because of the punitive expeditions which followed. These war crimes should not let us ignore the judgement of the police sergeant at Alice Springs which he voiced to the Board of Inquiry into the Coniston killings in 1928: 'If some severe steps are not taken they will drive the pastoralists out of the country.'

About this time, Aborigines started to employ the methods of the Europeans by engaging in political protest. Deputations to premiers and letters to editors started to appear. These moves were a far cry from the attack that had been launched on the invaders across the nineteenth century but they were far from rootless attempts to imitate or compromise.

At the 1938 sesqui-centenary events in Sydney, Aborigines protested against the re-enactment of Phillip's landing and they published a monthly newspaper. The need of the Europeans to place a full-scale army in the north of Australia in the 1940s also enabled it to move freely into the regions such as Arnhem Land for the first time. Still, the resistance continued and a homestead was burnt to the ground in 1957.

Today, the resistance is spread right across the continent from the Cape Barren islanders through Redfern and onto Gove. The Black Panther Party, the establishment of the tent Embassy in Canberra and the battles by the Gurindji have made it possible for this lecture to be prepared.

My ideas are grounded in the upsurge of Black revolt just as firmly as other historians' ideas have been grounded in the social practice of the colonial invaders, those Lords of Human Kind.

The publication of the lecture stimulated a group of students to widen and deepen the preceding sketch, for which they asked me to contribute the following 'Preface':

The Black Resistance,

An introduction to the history of the Aborigines' struggle against British Colonialism

Fergus Robinson and Barry York

Widescope, Camberwell, 1977.

Historical wisdom is not much altered by the diligent efforts of researchers. Most great upheavals in our appreciation of the past come from social, political and economic forces which call forth new historians who find new evidence as part of a wider battle on behalf of hitherto oppressed and neglected groups.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the ways in which Aborigines left and re-entered Australia's written history. When the battle for control of Australia was on in earnest, the Aborigines were a vital part of the history books. For as long as the Aborigines could not be ignored in real life, they held an important place in the accounts of European expansion. By the time academic history started to be written here, early this century, the Aborigines' physical resistance had been broken in the southern part of the continent. And so Aborigines were put aside, treated as curiosities, or, at least, as nothing more than a natural impediment like fire, flood and drought, which the heroic squatters had to overcome.

With only very rare exceptions, this continued to be the way in which historians of Australia treated Aborigines until about ten years ago when the Black power movement in the U.S.A. and de-colonisation in Africa combined with a renewed upsurge of Aboriginal struggle to make it harder for historians to go on being the exclusive voice of the master race.

This book, much more than the dozens of other contributions to the re-evaluation of Aboriginal history which have appeared since C.D. Rowley's *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society* in 1970, is the direct consequence of altered political facts. This does not mean that *The Black Resistance* lacks objectivity. On the contrary, it speaks a great truth just as the continuing silence by most historians was, and is, nothing more than the voice of the exterminators.

The Black Resistance will have little or no impact on the way Australian history is written and taught. Books and ideas cannot shake the complacency of scholarship. That requires prolonged struggle by students inside their classrooms and in the community at large. Above all, it requires the continued fight of Aborigines to secure their land.

Because the continuance of this fight is certain, it is already time to consider the next steps in the re-writing of Aboriginal history. The fact that most history professors have not got even to stage one is a matter of no importance.

The Black Resistance has rightly concentrated on one task – establishing that violent struggle by Aborigines against foreign invasion was an on-going and continent-wide response. The next major task is to extend and deepen this initial survey. Clearly, whole books can be written about the fighting experiences of many different tribes. Such studies need to be undertaken. They will consolidate this book's basic thesis while at the same time altering the contours of particular incidents and individuals described here. This process of refinement and strengthening needs to be continued, but it must not become a research end for its own sake as there are other areas which require attention.

Primarily, effort has to be put into the period between the end of openly physical conflict and the start of the present Aboriginal movement, which had its beginnings in the 1920s. For as long as violence was not a reasonable option, Aborigines wisely found other methods of survival, of surviving to fight another day. As just one example, they kept out of sight. When we hear of the discovery of a group of Blacks who had never previously seen whites we can be fairly sure that they had seen whites before; indeed, they had seen them coming and made sure that they kept out of sight. These efforts of concealment were as demanding and as magnificent in their particular way as was the Long March of the Chinese Communists. The story of this part of the 'Black Resistance' will depend almost entirely on Aboriginal people writing it down, just as they already retell it to each other orally. Of course, they must decide precisely when they want to tell us their military secrets.

Within these deceptively passive forms of Black resistance is embedded a rock-hard determination to hold onto what must not be lost, coupled with the lively desire to reshape some of the newcomers' artifacts and customs. What these more recent practices may lack in outwardly heroic attractiveness, they more than make up for by their exciting inventiveness, to which Aboriginal women contribute more than their share.

The Black Resistance will add powerfully to the movement for a new Aboriginal history, to a history which does not dehumanize, whether by demeaning or deifying Blacks. The authors have avoided the racist vocabulary of massacres, treachery and going walkabout which still detracts from some recent academic attempts to write about Aboriginal resistance. This book is a substantial start to one aspect of the movement to continue and expand the struggles that Aborigines are still waging. Only when the lessons of the Black resistance have been learnt in practice by all the Australian people will we have an independent and socialist nation. New enemies appear. What remains constant is the willingness of peoples everywhere to resist oppression.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FRONTIER

An Interpretation of the Aboriginal response to the invasion and settlement of Australia

By Henry Reynolds

History Department, James Cook University

Reviewed by Humphrey McQueen, *National-Times*, 11-17 October 1981, p. 43.

This is the most important book ever on Aboriginal-European contact. Ten years research have helped to make it so and have encouraged Henry Reynolds's active acceptance of the subtle range of Aboriginal responses. His book is not pro-black in any sense of feeling sorry

for them. Instead, Reynolds demonstrates that Aborigines were and remain the makers of their own destinies. History does not fall out of their skies: they too help to make it.

By exploring across the frontier, Reynolds has remade history as it is written. He has done the seemingly impossible by documenting the response of a pre-literate people.

The Other Side of the Frontier is so huge with ideas and so rich in detail that no review could do justice to the book or to its author, who is associate professor of history at Townsville's James Cook University. The most that I can do here is to display a sample of what Henry Reynolds has worked so long to understand.

One of the most important parts of Reynolds's case is that there was, and is, no such thing as *the* Aboriginal response. Different groups and individuals reacted according to their needs and circumstances, some with kindness and some with hostility; some with a gentleness which turned to ferocity when it was misunderstood as weakness and abused.

The guts of Reynolds's argument depends on the flexibility of Aboriginal culture which he sees it as 'both more conservative and more innovative than standard accounts have suggested.' By incorporating the new back into the old, Aborigines added to their inheritance, making their tradition a living process. Hence, for some young blacks, white society promised a way out of the repressiveness of a marriage system which favoured the old men.

In her opening pages of *The Timeless Land*, Eleanor Dark recreated the mystery and wonder brought by the sight of Captain Cook's sailing ships in 1770. Reynolds extends the novelist's empathy across the continent where news spread faster than explorers and straying cattle.

Friendliness was often the Aborigines' first response because they could not imagine that their land was forfeit. As Reynolds has it, they were not aware that an invasion had place. He further shows that some tribal Aborigines still believe that the whites will go away. Such Aborigines agree with the Chinese historian, who, on being asked what he thought had been the impact of Christianity on Europe, replied: 'It's too soon to tell.'

Yet helpfulness could have had a double response with tribes providing guides so as to keep whites away from the sacred sites.

Once the fact of invasion was realised, sorcery provided Aborigines with a weapon against the materially more powerful Europeans; droughts, floods and accidents were proofs of the value of traditional culture against the occupiers. Sorcery also offered explanations for the catastrophes overwhelming black civilisation. Diseases brought by the whites were interpreted as the evil influence of enemy tribes who remained more significant to the Aboriginal scheme of things than nearby whites could ever become.

The primary question which the Aborigines had to settle was theological: 'Were the whites human beings?' Blacks began by recognising Europeans as their dead relatives and friends. When the whites did not remember their previous lives, Aborigines worked out that the experience of death had reduced their memory as well as their intelligence. Reynolds shows how this initial religious view of the invaders was supplemented in the Aborigines' minds by more secular approaches.

One of Reynolds's sources is the language coined to account for the changes brought by the whites. At first, Aborigines applied their own words for 'ghost, spirit, eternal, departed, the dead' to the whites. In South Australia, they 'called white men *grinkai* the term for a peeled, pink corpse'. Boots became 'footstinkers'. One group extended its words for anything dangerous, such as snakes, to 'alcohol, opium and medicines.'

In a later stage, Aborigines accepted whites as beings like themselves who had to be assimilated into traditional society if they were to survive. Sexual exchange was a means to assimilation. Europeans 'paid' for sex with goods but these payments could never be great enough since intercourse had given the whites a kinship with Aborigines, Henceforth, what the whites possessed belonged equally to their new black relatives; or so the Aborigines believed. From the other side of the frontier, Aboriginal demands were seen as robberies.

In a society where sharing is a natural order, there is no notion of thanks and so the blacks became 'ungrateful' as well as 'lazy'.

Words changed with realities and Aborigines adapted more than their vocabularies. Shortly after the introduction of dogs to Van Diemen's land, the Aborigines there were hunting with them. In other parts of Australia, blacks built their own stockyards for emus as well as for the sheep and cattle taken from their white relations. At one place, the Aborigines built a bridge to get sheep across a river.

Thus, blacks were willing to work but they did not appreciate why someone else had a right to take the products of their labour. Reynolds wonders why more white workers did not take the same position.

In his final chapter, 'Other Frontiers', Reynolds looks at contact with seamen, farmers, miners, towns and missionaries; of the last named he reports one tribesman telling a priest: 'no more tobacco, no more h'allelulia'.

You do not have to agree with every point in *The Other Side of the Frontier* in order to be convinced of Reynolds's basic proposition, which is transforming the whole debate about the position of blacks in white Australia.

The book's production does less than justice to its contents. First, there is the obscurity of the publisher, who lacks the one thing which this book most deserves, namely, distribution. Secondly, there are no illustrations,; the footnotes, bibliography and index are all excellent. In quite minor matters, the prose could have benefitted from an outside editor who might have abolished a slightly apologetic tone. These are counsels of perfection, readily remedied in the countless editions to come.

A third of Reynolds's book concerns Aboriginal resistance and he conclusively destroys the comforting European story that Australia's Aborigines, unlike American Indians and Maoris, did not fight for their lands. The legal fiction that Australia was a settled and not a conquered colony is still used to deny land rights.

The fact of Aboriginal resistance has been known even to scholars for a few years now, partly because of Reynolds's previous publications. What his book does is to place this violence in its cultural contexts to illustrate its development and variety, showing that, at first, their 'violence was judicial rather than martial'. Whites would not accept the rules of 'pay-back' and sought total domination. Widespread resistance followed. Reynolds mentions a few leaders, including a Tasmanian woman, Walyer, who should take the space now given to Truganinni. Important things are explained about Jimmy Blacksmith, that sable-skinner white bushranger.

Reynolds calculates that blacks killed 2,000 to 2,500 whites and that whites killed 20,000 blacks, nearly half of them in Queensland. This geographical imbalance does not mean that Queensland settlers were nastier. They had the advantage of coming later with more efficient guns.

In a further contrast, Reynolds notes that about 5,000 Europeans from north of the Tropic of Capricorn died in the five conflicts from the Boer War to Vietnam. In another 75-year period, from 1860 to 1935, as many as 10,000 blacks were killed in fights against Europeans in north Australia.

Whites today urge blacks to forget. Blacks can't and won't. Reynolds reflects upon the lie of the nation of Anzacs, the country of 'lest we forget', telling Aborigines to do just that.