terdependence — the rest of the world being more dependent on America than the other way around. In many respects, Waltz provides a neat summary of the way in which the United States of America dominates both economically and politically the so-called Free World; his attempt to make a direct analogy with the Soviet Union, implying that exactly the same forces are at work, is without foundation. However, having shown that America is less dependent on the rest of the world than Britain in the 19th century does not mean that America will not react to the interdependence that she feels, or that capitalist states in Europe and Japan will not attempt to change their relative dependence and to challenge American power. The evidence put forward by Mandel suggests that in Western Europe this will indeed be the case.

The major weaknesses of Mandel’s book lie in the brevity of his analysis and a lack of sharpness in his economic arguments; it is for this reason that the papers by Johnson and Hymer and Rowthorn are such useful supplements. For those who hope for the development of socialism in Europe, Mandel’s book provides only an analysis of the contemporary situation and likely developments; it does not show how to move from an uprising of workers and students like that in France in 1968 to actually gaining power, nor does he show how it will be possible for working class movements in Europe to “catch up” to the international outlook of corporations, let alone surpass them in the organization of the United Socialist States of Europe. Mandel provides only the starting point. Nevertheless, the power of Mandel’s book lies in this ability to abstract from a very complex set of observed phenomena, thus providing an analysis of the major trends in the American and European economies and to carry the implications forward into predictions about the future.

DAVID EVANS

THE DESTRUCTION OF ABORIGINAL SOCIETY,

THE DESTRUCTION OF ABORIGINAL SOCIETY is the first of a series of three volumes on the general theme “Aboriginal Policy and Practice” undertaken by Professor Rowley on behalf of the Social Sciences Research Council of Australia, and representing the results of a major research project by the Council.

The present volume deals with the facts of frontier clash and its aftermath from the days of first settlement until the period following World War II. The second volume examines the emergence of the part-Aboriginal communities of the closely settled areas, while the third volume deals with the situation of Aborigines in the settlements (the ‘colonial areas’ of Australia as the author describes them) and examines the effect of land policies, mining development and labor policies. The whole project represents the first attempt to assemble on a national scale the facts relating to the treatment of Aborigines in all the Australian States. The Social Sciences Research Council, no less than the distinguished author, are to be congratulated on undertaking a project of such national importance.
The Destruction of Aboriginal Society is basically a history of the policies adopted towards Aborigines in the various States and the way they worked out in practice; but underlying the historical detail is the thesis emphasised by Professor Rowley very early in the book that "no adequate assessment of the Aboriginal predicament can be made so long as the historical dimension is lacking; it is the absence of information on background which has made it easy for intelligent persons in each successive generation to accept the stereotype of an incompetent group".

The first impact of this book will be to shock many Australians at the violence which the historical records reveal in the treatment of Aborigines. As the author says "No real allowance has been made for the extreme violence of the treatment of the Aborigines; for the facts are easily enough established that homicide, rape and cruelty have been commonplace over wide areas and long periods". Though this is far from being a sensational book, it faces Australians up squarely to the crimes committed against the Aboriginal people. The Tasmanian genocide differs only in degree from events on the mainland; all States have a grim record of massacres and other killings, of which the following example is typical. This was a reprisal action by white settlers on the Clarence River in 1841, prompted by theft on Ramorine Station, subsequently found to have been committed by one of the white employees:

"A group of Aborigines was found upon the Orara camped in great numbers. A cordon was formed during the night, hemming the camp in with the river behind it. At a given signal at daybreak . . . the camp was rushed, and men, women and children were shot down indiscriminately. Some took to the river and were shot as they swam. Their dead bodies subsequently floated down past the Settlement (Grafton)."

Violence against Aborigines continued unabated wherever new frontiers were being opened up, and "as late as 1958 there was a report of Aboriginal prisoners kept on the chain at Halls Creek, the Western Australian Police Commissioner stating in defence that the Aboriginal prisoner preferred chaining to being locked up".

"Regulations allowed the use of the neck chain to bring in prisoners in special circumstances; but by this time its use had become so much of a commonplace that its cruelty was likely to be denied and it was usual for the constable, with his trackers, to 'bring in' not only the persons charged, but a line of 'witnesses' chained together in this way. Roth says that even children of fourteen to sixteen years might be so treated; that women were chained with the men; that they might be completely at the mercy of the police in this way for weeks, with the chains never removed, especially as the female 'witnesses' taken were often young. He stated that the connecting chains between prisoners or witnesses might be no more than two feet in length. (Chains were still in use after World War II)."

And what of the effect on Aborigines of this process of violence and subjection? Rowley comments as follows: " . . . there has been a long-drawn-out process of conquest and of hopeless but stubborn resistance, both material and intellectual. There is a long history of guerrilla tactics of a subtle and determined kind where this was possible. There was also the unwilling compliance which
mocks the conqueror, and at least within the warm circle of the in-group, holds to ridicule his later half-hearted efforts to make amends.”

“This tradition of resistance still remains. The part-Aboriginal groups of the south have inherited it from their tribal forefathers and it may be renewed by what contact they retain with the ‘full bloods’, who mainly reside in the more isolated parts of the continent. Well meant but obtuse efforts of missions and government have been held off with ridicule, or with the defence of apathy, often for generations.”

Of special interest in how the present position arises from the past is the question of land rights. Contrasting the conditions of American Indians and of Maoris on the one hand, and of Aborigines on the other, Professor Rowley says:

“Not being a villager, he (the Aboriginal) had no claim to a particular area of land; his more subtle relationship with his country was either ignored or not understood. He lacked the organisation which could have enabled effective warfare in defence of his interests. He did not have the multi-purposed leadership offered by the system of tribal chiefdoms; and his society was marked by the absence of hierarchical organisation. Thus he had neither the obvious prior right to a certain area, which might have influenced governments, nor the organisation to defend any part of his traditional hunting and gathering area...

“Had the Amerindians lacked the organisation for war, there may well have been no Indian treaties.

“... The Maori was respected as a warrior; the Aboriginal was despised as a rural pest.”

Thus, while other indigenous people had their rights to land recognised in treaties or other agreements, in Australia from the earliest days of European settlement there has been no recognition whatever of Aboriginal land rights, and this attitude has hardened over the years, creating the entrenched resistance being encountered today by Aboriginal communities, such as the Gurindji and the Yirrkala people, who are claiming more and more insistently the ownership of some at least of their traditional lands.

On the main theme of the book, government policies in relation to Aborigines, Professor Rowley gives a detailed account of the policies and the measures to implement them, adopted by the various States and by the Commonwealth in the Northern Territory. He begins with the policy laid down by the British Government before the colonies attained independence. In all cases this was substantially the same — civilisation, Christianity, the status and rights of the British subject, protection of the person. But he notes that “On the Swan, as on the Hawkesbury, there was a very early concession that settlers were entitled to act in ‘self-defence’ while at the same time exhortations comparable to those of the Governor of NSW were arriving from England to treat with severity all acts of injustice (except the taking of land) against the native people.”

Of this and of subsequent policies adopted by the various governments, Rowley makes the devastating comment “Policies and practices which result in
the rapid disappearance of the subjects may be fairly described as failures"; and elsewhere he offers the following reason: "The relationship of Aborigines to particular areas, and the nature of their society, and economy, were not well enough known to provide the facts on which an intelligent application of any policy could be based."

But it is highly unlikely that in practice the widest knowledge and understanding could have withstood the economic demands of the settlers with their insatiable urge for more and yet more land for grazing which struck at the very basis of Aboriginal society. Rowley describes the process as follows:

"There was a kind of inevitability in this progression, from first contact to violence; from destruction of native food supply, or of the incentives to hunt and gather it, to the establishment of either a government centre for rationing or a pastoral enterprise where rations could be gained in return for minimal labor (this made possible an Aboriginal adjustment in accordance with the moral principle of reciprocity). Then came the rapid decline in numbers through new diseases, often exacerbated by malnutrition. The loss of freedom to move and of control of the sacred places seriously affected the society in the basis of the man's work, which was intimately involved with places and the spirits, and in turn affected the processes of socialisation and the attitude to children."

Ideas of protection of Aborigines arose in quite early times, and Rowley traces the development of these from 1837 when a Select Committee on Aborigines reported to the House of Commons, recommending a number of measures including "Special codes of law to protect the Aboriginal until he learned to live within the framework of British law". Rowley observes "Thus began a process of cause and effect, since protective legislation is inevitably discriminatory in effect". Protection reached its peak in the Queensland legislation, on which Rowley comments:

"The cost of this protective measure was to place the Aboriginal at the mercy of officials. There were no provisions for appeal. No matter how lofty the intentions, its execution would reflect the attitudes of the police and others who now had to administer it. These would vary a good deal, but the background made certain a tight pattern of authoritarian management."

As protection and discrimination came under increasing fire not only from Aborigines but from other sections of the Australian community, official policy shifted to assimilation of which Rowley has this to say:

"... the destruction of Aboriginal society, after over a century and a half, would be either arrested and reversed, or would proceed by other means. Governments were to accept the assimilation policy as the other means. This policy envisaged that Aboriginal socialisation would give place to some officially approved process which would finally merge Aboriginal social habits in the majority social order."

World War II accelerated the process of social change in Australia and had a profound effect on relations between Aborigines and other Australians. In the Northern Territory, many Aborigines experienced in army workshops equal employment conditions with white Australians; they became more vocal in
their demands for their rights, and their plight became much more widely known to other Australians. Dissatisfaction with all previous government policies strengthened, and support developed for more advanced policies, notably the objective of complete self-determination for the Aboriginal minority, which had been advocated by the Communist Party for a number of years. On the significance of this demand, Professor Rowley comments as follows:

"A draft policy statement in 1963 ... included among the objectives for Aborigines 'the right to control their own affairs as a distinct national minority within the Australian nation'. The rigid paternalism of government policy, on the other hand, must have been playing into the hands of the Communist Party, by conditioning Aborigines to listen to the only real criticism of that policy over a considerable period. Thus as early as 1929 one can see the present set of political complications taking shape. The Communists have in fact been more alert than any other political group, over a long period, to the potentially critical nature of the Aboriginal issue."

As one would expect, Professor Rowley has some very pertinent things to say about the role of Aborigines in the labor force. He points out that the effectiveness of the Aborigines, as units of labor in the pastoral industry had long been demonstrated at the same time as it was being denied; and that part at least of the reason for much of the protective legislation was a recognition of the need to conserve this cheap and useful source of labor. The resulting exploitation is indicated in this comment:

"It is interesting to see the logic of economics operating to produce a truly colonial labor situation. The reserves were inevitably to become enclaves where the Aboriginal family produced in safety the laborers of the future. From here they were to go into rural employment, and here they were to return when not required. To the extent that they left their families on the reserve, they could be paid the wage of a single man, since the government or government-subsidised mission management was there to ensure that the family was maintained. The system could thus operate as a subsidy to the pastoral and other industries. Perhaps only in Queensland was this economic integration into the economy fully realised."

But Professor Rowley is in no doubt about the need for Aborigines to be integrated into the economy on equitable terms:

"... the Aboriginal has been left in the situation where he badly needs economic and legal hitting power to confront prejudice and establish his rights in fact. But to exercise such power he needs his place in the economy."

There are many other questions on which this book sheds a revealing light — Aboriginal culture and the enormous gulf separating it from European culture; the role of the missions; the fallacy of relying on education to transform Aboriginal attitudes into our own; the meting out of 'justice' to Aborigines offending against an alien code. It is not possible in a review to bring out all the value of this book, but the extracts quoted are sufficient to show that it is informative in its presentation of the historical facts; it is perceptive in its analysis, and forthright in its criticism. It is a must for all Australians who are anxious to know 'how things got the way they are' in relations to Aborigines, and who want to understand how to improve the situation.

GLORIA LAIRD

80

AUSTRALIAN LEFT REVIEW—SEPTEMBER, 1971