

Book Reviews

Contents

- America's Australia : Australia's America : a guide to issues and references,** Siracusa, Joseph M., and Cheong, Yeong-Han, (Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 1997.) pp. 147. (ISBN: 0941690741 \$US12.95.) 99

Joseph M. Siracusa & Yeong-Han Cheong. *America's Australia, Australia's America: A Guide To Issues And References*, (Claremont CA: Regina Books, 1997). Xii + 147pp. Documents, Bibliographic Essay & Index. (ISBN: 0941690741, US\$12.95.)

Given the long, but somewhat erratic, relationship between America and Australia, it is rather surprising when one finds that there have been relatively few academic texts published on this subject. *America's Australia, Australia's America: A Guide To Issues And References* is the latest offering in this somewhat underrepresented field. Written by two scholars from the University Of Queensland's History Department, the book represents a comprehensive introduction to the unique relationship that America and Australia have shared.

From its inception, the Australian colonies considered themselves to be vulnerable to foreign powers. European colonial powers such as France, Holland, Germany and even Russia were seen as threats to the fledgling New South Wales colony. By the early part of the twentieth century these fears had been transferred from Europe to Asia. With the Japanese victory over the Russian fleet at Port Arthur, the alarmist elements in Australia began heralding the country's immediate fall to Japanese imperialism as the tide of fear began to rise. Indeed, even the most reserved of Australian quarters registered surprise at both the Japanese navy's relatively easy victory, and at London's seeming approval and support for the Japanese position. Although there had been some recognition of the fact that the British Admiralty had been the tutors of the Japanese navy, the predominate view was that Britain should be thinking about the security of the dominions before congratulating herself over a job done; perhaps, too well.

With this level of tension, the visit to Australia in 1908 by the American "Great White Fleet" as part of its world tour did much to quell Australian concerns. Every day that the US ships were in dock papers devoted whole pages to their magnificence and their awe-inspiring metallic finishes. Itineraries were published and people visited the harbours where the ships were docked in order to catch a glimpse of American ingenuity. And all the while, Australian parliamentarians delivered eulogies designed to inform the Australian public that Japan posed no threat while the 'Yanks' were around.

Following this early official contact Australian representatives went to all lengths to create a formal relationship with their trans-Pacific counterparts. While America had been ruthlessly pragmatic in the execution of its foreign policy, Australia was erratic at best. If Henry Kissinger's oft stated sentiment that a nation's foreign policy must be well-balanced for it to be effective is true, then it is any wonder that Australia had little success in allaying its fears by recruiting America as a powerful friend prior to World War Two. Regardless of the fact that Australia has continually rejected perceived encroachments of American culture into Australian life, there exists a clear similarity between these two Pacific Rim nations.

Both these similarities and the differences between Australia and America are profiled in the first chapter of the book. Logically progressing through World War Two and the and the early post-war years, the authors present a balanced introduction to the recent, and most-productive period of the Australian-American relationship. Significantly, Siracusa and Cheong have decided to include a range of primary source documents in the appendix of the book commencing from this period so as to allow the reader to make their own assessments of the events and situations described.

Not surprisingly, attention is given to the relationship which grew between the two nations during the years of the Cold War—a relationship which became formal on the signing of the ANZUS Treaty which came into force on April 29, 1953. Furthermore a large portion of the book is devoted to the relationship between Australia and America during the Vietnam War—and rightly so. As the authors note, the visit by President Lyndon B. Johnson was the first by an American President on Australian soil. Nor is the significance missed of Prime Minister Harold Holt's enthusiasm for supporting America in its South-East Asian War efforts. Importantly, the chapter is concluded with a summary of the legacy which Australia's involvement in America's war of Communist containment had left behind.

In keeping with the sociopolitical theme of *America's Australia, Australia's America*, the authors have included a chapter which at first glance might seem somewhat out of place. However, the focus on the peace movements and the various disarmament drives, both private and official, give the reader a clear insight into some of the underlying tensions which a relationship between a superpower and a regional power is likely to wring. Not surprisingly the text is tinged with some irony at the seeming incompatibility of Australia's stance on nuclear weapons and other instruments of mass destruction and its official relationship with the only nation in the world who has dropped the atomic bomb on a live target.

The final chapter, which makes the book the most current in its field is the focus on post-Cold War relations and the effects that the various governments in both countries have had on the unique relationship which Australia and America share. Moving through the Gulf War to the Presidential visit by Bill Clinton in 1996, Siracusa and Cheong have highlighted the recognisable shift in the nature of the alliance. Noting that Clinton's stay marks the second visit by an American President in five years, the authors have shown that the relationship, although different, has been strengthened perceptibly.

Although written without footnotes—in an attempt to make the book more accessible to people who have no historical training and who might be otherwise be daunted—*America's Australia, Australia's America* includes an appropriate collection of documents which also make the task of understanding easier to those unfamiliar with Australian-American relations. Blessed with an excellent Index, the book provides enough new information for the experienced academic, in the form of the post-Cold War section, and enough clarity and assistance to undergraduates and interested members of the general public to have wide appeal. The first book on Australian-American relations co-written by an American and a Malaysian—both of whom are residents of Australia—*America's Australia, Australia's America* provides a unique perspective on a subject which is currently in no danger of academic saturation.

Reviewed by Laurence Brown

America's Australia, Australia's America is available on-line at Amazon.com.