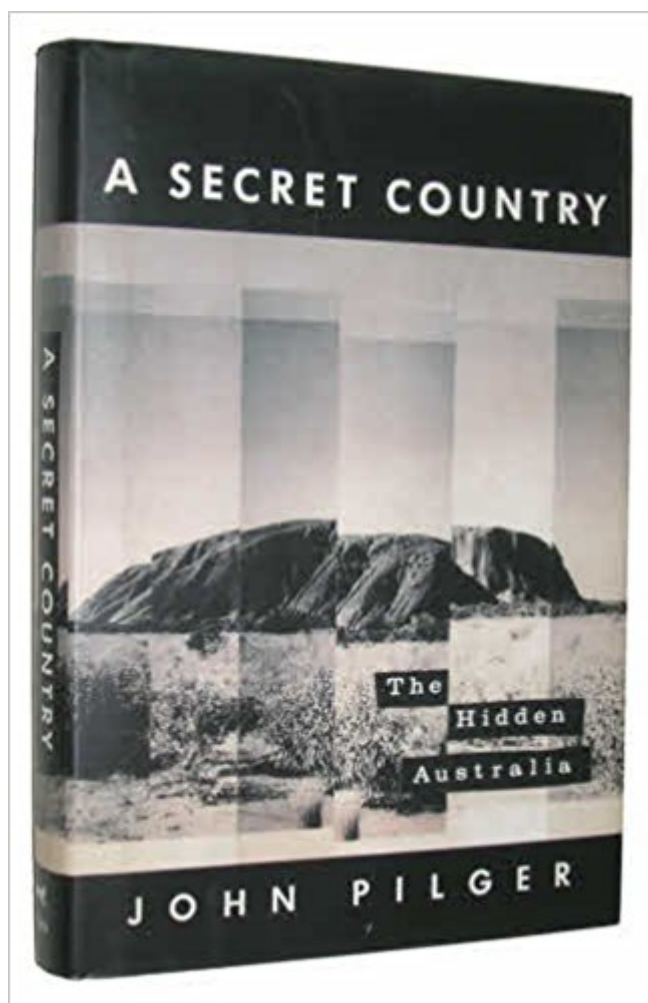


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A Secret Country: The Hidden Australia



Synopsis

EXPATRIATE JOURNALIST and film-maker John Pilger writes about his homeland with life-long affection and a passionately critical eye. In this fully updated edition of A SECRET COUNTRY, he pays tribute to a little known Australia and tells a story of high political drama.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

An Australian-born journalist and documentary filmmaker now living in London, Pilger provides a bracing rebuttal of the conventional view of his native land as an egalitarian nation with homes and jobs for all. Praising the innovative social reforms that made turn-of-the century Australia famous as a "Workers' Paradise," Pilger contends that these benefits have been abrogated in the '80s as a result of the Conservative Labor Party government's tax giveaways to the "Order of Mates" (including media mogul Rupert Murdoch and beer baron Alan Bond), which has resulted in an economic crisis. In addition, the author argues, white Australians have never acknowledged that their country was founded on the genocide of the aborigines, still discriminated against today, and has been run ever since as a colonial tool, first of Great Britain and now of the United States--the CIA, the author suggests in convincing detail, connived in the 1975 overthrow of a Labor government unpopular with the U.S. Pilger's strong tone may alienate those who don't already agree with him, but he backs up his contentions with careful documentation. Overall, though, his thoughtful book will appeal to those seeking a more realistic understanding of the land Down Under. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Pilger, an Australian journalist, argues that while Australia has developed a popular image as a

nation of koalas and Crocodile Dundees, it is in fact a secret country with a dark past that includes the slaughter of entire Aboriginal tribes. He also believes that Australia continues to be dominated by British and American imperialism; the British via a governor-general who can sack the elected government at any time (which happened to the Whitlam government in 1975), and America via its military dominance of the South Pacific and its economic ties with Australia. Further, Pilger argues Australia has been betrayed by its own leaders who have created a transnational economy that compels it to sell off its resources and rely on tourism and international money markets. This has led to reduced wages, lower living standards, and poverty for many. Unless Australia casts off British and American influence and starts to manage its resources wisely, it will face a dismal future.

Recommended for large academic and public library collections.- Jeffrey R. Herold, Bucyrus P.L., Ohio
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The Australian people ought to be happy and relieved, that John Pilger had the courage and spirit, to be one of the few, to finally tell the de-mythologized history of his native land. In "A Secret Country: The Hidden Australia" from 1989 (first American edition - 1991), he does just that! Mr. Pilger actually honors his nation of birth, by telling the truth (both the good and the bad), and by not shying away from subjects that are deemed: too controversial for many Australians to openly talk about. This is attributable to Mr. Pilger's high-sense of duty as an investigative-journalist, writer, and humanitarian. He dispels with the 'romanticized' view of his country's origin: from page 78 -"Even the image of ourselves which Crocodile Dundee personifies, that of the outrageous yet sceptical "larrikin" who rejects all convention and authority, is mostly wrong. True, generations of us were encouraged to distrust, even despise the police: a bequest of our convict past, it was said. But we made only anti-authoritarian noises behind authority's back and, in the end, we did as we were told, with some of us going so far as to adopt the peculiar deference that "lags" have for their "screws." Consider that within a few years of the abolition of white slavery in Australia, those who had survived King George's concentration camps were rushing to help the Crown put down popular resistance in China, New Zealand and South Africa, and that during the imperial slaughter-fest of 1914 - 18 their sons volunteered a vassal's army and stoically sustained more casualties, proportionately, than the British or anyone else." He also points out important facts and details that are more than likely taken for granted, especially here in the U.S. Page 248 - "Long before Europe and North America, Australia had a legal basic wage, an eight-hour working day, pensions, maternity allowance, child benefits and the vote for women." John Pilger tells it like it is. From Australia's humble beginnings as a far-away outpost of Great Britain, where it could send her

so-called undesirables: the downtrodden of Ireland, England, Scotland, and Wales. The cruel, inhumane treatment and genocide of the Aborigines (very much like the U.S., Spain, etc.). The former and subsequent Australian government's: tacit consent and obsequious approval of Great Britain and the U.S. to intervene and obstruct Australian sovereignty. In the case of the U.S., Australia is very vital for her vast and open space (the U.S. has many military installations in Australia: NRO, NSA, etc.). And Australia's richness in minerals (specifically uranium: in this regard, it is as vital as Canada, and more so than Kazakhstan and Nigeria to the U.S. "war machine"), makes her an assured and prized possession of the Anglo-American Empire! I know many people may not like my assessment, and Mr. Pilger is more diplomatic and does not state it in such a direct and blunt way as myself. But he does make it quite clear in the last chapter "Breaking Free", of why a nuclear-free zone is important and essential, to the region's future independence and of severing her ties to Washington (New Zealand was the outspoken proponent of this, and had to endure fierce opposition from the U.S. government. Sadly now, both New Zealand and Australia have never been so completely under the sphere of U.S. foreign policy, as they are today!). I believe one day, the Australian people will have the foresight to see, what is best for them! A great read: informative, honest, and defiant all-in-one. John Pilger delivers again! ("A Secret Country: The Hidden Australia" John Pilger 1989, first American edition 1991, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York ISBN: 0-394-57462-1) Love and Peace, Carlos Romero

I THINK THIS SHOULD BE COMPULSORY READING FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS

This is a must read for those interested in Australia. It was recommended to me by a friend that lives over there.

Highlights that resonated with me were found in the documenting of how the political right and the right-wing media colluded to put one over on the Australian populace and destroy the economic equilibrium (Aboriginals excluded, of course) that once prevailed (I seem to recall that there was a time in living memory when Australia's ratio of executive to worker pay was the most egalitarian in the world). When I read it, long ago, it helped me understand the new role Murdoch was playing here in the US at the time in destroying our own middle class and vastly widening the gap between rich and poor. For those, what, 25 and younger?, we didn't always have FOX News.

Yeah, Pilger does tend to shout, as reviewer G. Rogers ("Trouble in Paradise") correctly points out.

But shouting isn't always just to "make up for the weakness of the argument". It can also signal exasperation. Or a desire to warn, alert, awaken. As an Australian, I found this book a revelation when I read it twenty years ago. Particularly his well annotated discussion of the events that led to "The Dismissal" of 11 Nov 1975. That was a deeply strange and troubling time in the Lucky Country (cf. [Australian constitutional crisis of 1975](#) at Wikipedia), and Pilger's chapter casts real light on it, without depending on "deep throat/cigarette man" anonymous informants for either his insights or his information. Sidebar. I navigated to this page today because of a sentence I read this morning: "Israeli security officials said they were looking at ways to force Hamas from power, and were focusing on an economic squeeze that would prompt Palestinians to clamour for the return of Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas' ousted Fatah Party." (Amy Tiebel, Canadian Press, 14feb06). It just rang a bell, that's all. I give the book five stars because it blazed new territory when it was written, and has been ignored and insulted rather than discredited in the years since. Anyone interested in Australia (other than as a meaningless tourist destination) should at least consider reading this fine and passionate book. Highly recommended.

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