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**Australia and the China Problem
during the Korean War Period**

By HENRY S. ALBINSKI

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Department of International Relations
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 CANBERRA 1964



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Manuscript completed on 1 June 1964

AUSTRALIA AND THE CHINA PROBLEM
DURING THE KOREAN WAR PERIOD

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1964 by post as a book



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June 1964

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1951 and 1952 at Washington

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Numerous individuals willingly supplied factual or interpretative comment which has been incorporated into this work. While it has not been possible to attribute such interview information in most cases, a very special note of thanks is extended to those who helped in this manner.

Several individuals gave much-appreciated and critical reading to the manuscript, namely, Professor J. D. B. Miller, Dr. George Modelski and Sir Alan Watt of the A. N. U., Dr. Richard Rosecrance of the University of California, Los Angeles, and Dr. Coral Bell of the University of Sydney. Thanks also to Mr. John Bennett for research assistance in United Nations sources.

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AUSTRALIA AND THE CHINA PROBLEM

DURING THE KOREAN WAR PERIOD

The post-war condition of Asia has been one of rapid and often troubled change. As a relatively isolated, under-populated yet Western country, situated on the edge of this unstable setting, Australia has naturally taken a keen interest in appraising the developments to her north and in devising appropriate policy measures. Within her perception of the Asian context the presence and influence of Communist China has been a central concern, perhaps even a preoccupation. She has felt that various military, diplomatic and economic antidotes must be applied to contain China's ability to exert direct or indirect pressure on her Asian neighbors, whose socio-political integrity is linked to Australia's own well-being. Nevertheless, Australia has never felt that her attitude and policies toward China should be governed by absolutist principles. She has appreciated the risks which attend a posture of unreserved hostility toward China, believing that an aroused and provoked China is a dangerous China.

The 'China problem' in Australia has therefore been a problem not simply of identifying the importance, the character and the strength of Chinese power. It has also turned on the proper balance which must be struck between resisting the circulation of this power and creating conditions in which accommodation can be achieved. It has not been an easy task, especially for a nation whose material and diplomatic resources are not of the first rank. Nor, in this setting of balancing and weighing alternative positions, has Australia escaped the inevitable internal debate about what should be done, and how, in particular circumstances. The area of agreement, however, has always been that there is a China problem, that it intimately affects Australia, and that it needs to be reckoned with seriously.

Much has happened since the Korean conflict closed in 1953, but the period of that war seems to offer reason for special attention. The general election of December 10, 1949, interrupted eight years of Labor

rule and introduced a Liberal-Country Party Government under R. G. (later Sir Robert) Menzies, which almost immediately was forced to find its bearings on evaluating the new China and devising a suitable policy posture. Then, according to one account, when the North Koreans crossed the 38th parallel and the Chinese subsequently intervened in the war, "Australia . . . found her policy towards China frozen at a time when it was still in formation."¹ To be sure, for a period of some three years Asian international relations were inescapably colored by perceptions of China and her behavior in and around the Korean perimeter. Australia too became affected, both in her external policy and at the level of domestic debate and political life. Indeed, once the war was over, its imprint lingered on, giving setting to later aspects of the China problem in Australia. The purpose of this study is to analyze Australian reactions to Communist China in a decisive stage of their development. The contention that Australia's China policy was 'frozen' by the advent of war in Korea cannot be dismissed lightly, for it implies fluidity before the initial Korean events and rigidity afterward. To test the truth or falsity of this characterization is in fact to write the story of this subject.

A Time of Indecision. December 1949-June 1950

At the point of the Liberals' December victory the new Chinese regime had been in existence slightly over two months. Only Communist bloc countries had extended diplomatic recognition, while intensive discussions continued among other Governments as the search for a possible common approach to China was pressed. Within the week, however, the Attlee Labor Government decided that it could not postpone its decision much longer; other Commonwealth countries and the United States were notified that the formal announcement of British recognition would appear early in January. By the opening days of January India, Pakistan and Burma had recognized Peking, and on January 6 Britain and Ceylon were added to the list. British spokesmen subsequently explained that although China had been on the agenda of the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers' conference which opened in Colombo on January 9, it had been clear for a time that because of varying attitudes among different Commonwealth members, even a

1

C. P. Fitzgerald, "China, Korea and Indo-China", in Gordon Greenwood, ed.: Australian Policies Toward Asia, Melbourne: Australian Institute of International Affairs 1954, part VI, p. 5.

full discussion at Colombo could not have been expected to produce a joint move toward recognition².

In what way did this British explanation apply to Australia? Can it rightly be said that by the time P. C. (later Sir Percy) Spender, the new External Affairs Minister, arrived at Colombo his Government had already charted a position on China, and one which was explicitly opposed to Chinese recognition? For the moment, two aspects of the picture can be isolated for analysis. First, the author is convinced that there was no established Liberal-Country Party view before the election, despite Professor Werner Levi's assertion that "the Opposition was against recognition"³. Levi footnotes this contention, otherwise unembellished, with reference to a remark by Spender on October 5 in the House. In this comment, which was very brief, Spender alleged that the Communists had come to power and were governing by force, and were being abetted by Russia. At most, his feelings against recognition could only be derived by inference⁴. There is considerable internal evidence that Spender was more or less thinking aloud on this occasion and that his views were still very much in a formative state. Additionally, not only was there no official or even semi-official Opposition position on Chinese recognition at that time, but it should also be reported that after Spender's statement the next two months failed to yield any Opposition references to Chinese recognition as such, before or during the electoral campaign.

Secondly, during the month's interval between the election and Colombo, there was scarcely any opportunity for the Government to shape a policy on China. Cabinet met only once, and then for ceremonial and organizational purposes. The Christmas holidays intervened. Spender left Australia on January 3, before Britain had made her recognition public, and when Menzies replied "no comment" to a question about his Government's reaction to London's move, it was un-

2

Kenneth Younger, U. K., Parl. Deb., H. of C., Vol. 472, March 13, 1950, col. 26 (written answers). Also see Younger, Vol. 475, May 24, 1950, col. 2187; and Ernest Bevin, col. 2083.

3

Werner Levi: Australia's Outlook on Asia, Sydney: Angus and Robertson 1958, p. 153.

4

Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 204, October 5, 1949, p. 964.

doubtedly more a gesture expressing uncertainty than a deliberate concealment of a fixed Australian position⁵. At Colombo both Spender and F. Doidge, the New Zealand Minister for External Affairs, criticized other Commonwealth states for having extended recognition before full Commonwealth consultation could be undertaken at the conference, though they "made it clear they understood the reasons which had prompted the other nations to grant recognition"⁶. At least part of the explanation why Spender and Doidge, rather than their Canadian or South African colleagues, should have spoken up in this fashion, was that both men represented Governments which only very recently had replaced their opponents in office. While they had been in receipt of advice from Britain and other Commonwealth Governments, there had been slight opportunity for them to think through their own positions and to offer suggestions in return. Hence Australia was unprepared to interlock with Britain on recognition before the Colombo conference because she herself had lacked time to crystallize a policy - any policy - on the subject.

None of the above should be construed to mean that the principal Australian figures of the time, especially Menzies and Spender, were not already disposed to pick and choose and weigh various ingredients in the China complex, and to build toward an eventual decision. Among the ingredients to which the Australian Government paid attention was the given fact of British recognition. From the beginning of concentrated thinking on how to handle a Communist government in China the British had been inclined to favor early recognition, spent the closing months of 1949 trying to persuade other Governments to adopt a similar view, and continued into the first half of 1950 to nudge others into supporting both recognition and U. N. seating for Peking⁷. Furthermore, in late 1949 and early 1950 the attitude of the British Government was not a party-political matter. Diplomatic officers, commercial interests, the press

5

The Sydney Morning Herald (hereafter referred to as S. M. H.), January 7, 1950.

6

Ibid., January 11, 1950.

7

Bevin, U. K. , Parl. Deb. , H. of C. , Vol. 475, May 24, 1950, cols. 2084-2085; Younger, ibid. , col. 2188; J. P. Jain, "Chinese Reaction to British Recognition of the People's Republic of China", International Studies, Vol. 4, July 1962, pp. 41-42.

and the Conservative Opposition rode with the Government in favoring rapid recognition for Britain and her friends. It was no less an anti-Communist than Winston Churchill who, respecting China, had declared in November that "one had to recognise lots of things and people in this world of sin and woe that one does not like. The reason for having diplomatic relations is not to confer a compliment, but to secure a convenience"⁸. This British solidarity must have impressed the new Australian Government. It was a Government which had a traditional affection for the senior member of the Commonwealth, believed in Commonwealth unity to the extent that could be achieved, and perhaps above all had at its head that staunch Anglophile, R. G. Menzies. As the pressure from London was brought to bear in December and early 1950, the Australian Government was not insensitive.

Yet there was more to Australia's reception of Britain's prompting than a sentimental wish to follow the leader. Britain was promoting recognition for particular reasons⁹, and some of these had special bearing for Australia. For one, there was the British economic stake in China, which stood at some quarter-billion pounds sterling. The author understands that Menzies was impressed by Britain's argument that recognition by Commonwealth Governments would help protect this investment, as well as economically valuable Hong Kong. It is likely that Menzies was then, as at most times, concerned about the erosion of British power and influence in the Far East. From this he derived the conclusion that concrete steps by Britain and her associates to establish

8

U. K., Parl. Deb., H. of C., Vol. 469, November 17, 1949, col. 2225. See summaries of British agreement on recognition in Evan Luard: Britain and China, London: Chatto and Windus 1962, pp. 77-80; Leon D. Epstein: Britain. Uneasy Ally, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1954, pp. 209-212.

9

For explanations of why Britain favored early recognition, see Bevin, U. K., Parl. Deb., H. of C., Vol. 475, May 24, 1950, col. 2082, and Younger, cols. 2186-2187; Kenneth Younger, "An Analysis of British and U. S. Policies in the Far East", Eastern World, Vol. 7, March 1953, p. 10; Clement R. Attlee, "Britain and America: Common Aims, Different Opinions", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 32, January 1954, p. 198; Sir Alexander Grantham, "What Great Britain Has Gained Through Recognising Red China", Vital Speeches, Vol. 21, December 1, 1954, p. 876.

working relations with China would operate toward preserving the economic feature of Britain's presence in the area, and could in turn enhance the British political and security role.

A second explanation of Britain's recognition policy was the need to maintain direct Western liaison with China so that Peking would not regard the West as an intractable opponent and, indeed, might be dissuaded from emulating Soviet behavior. There is no doubt that the Australian Government pondered this point with considerable care. On February 20, a few days after the Sino-Soviet treaty of friendship and mutual assistance had been signed, Spender expressed pessimism that China would become nationalist rather than Communist, or that the treaty would "mean anything else but close co-operation of foreign policy"¹⁰. Nevertheless, on reflection, in his Cabinet-approved statement to the House a few weeks later, he apparently had not surrendered all hope of accommodation, and in fact saw possibility of some useful working relations with China:

It is not for us to question the kind of government the Chinese people choose to live under. If they are satisfied with the Communist Government, that is their affair ... we do not accept the inevitability of a clash between the democratic and Communist way of life; there is no logical reason why democracy and communism, as distinct from Communist imperialism, should not be able to live together in the world. We would very much dislike seeing the traditional contacts severed between China and the Western world. We should like to think that the Chinese Communists would look for the sympathetic help of the Western democracies in the work of uniting and rehabilitating their country.¹¹

What seems clear in the period of the Liberal Government's first half-year in office is that it took the British explanation that recognition could pave the way toward moderating Chinese behavior very quickly and almost literally to heart. By the end of January, not only Britain but the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries had accorded recognition to Peking. Australia surveyed Chinese be-

10

Cited in S. M. H., February 21, 1950.

11

Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 206, March 9, 1950, p. 626.

havior and, simply put, endeavored to find some semblance of the positive effects that non-Communist recognition, and particularly British, might be producing. In general she was very much disappointed by what she saw, and most definitely by Peking's inhospitable reception of Britain. Between January 10-12, the U. N. Security Council considered a Soviet resolution to eject the Nationalists and substitute the Chinese People's Republic as the legitimate representative of China. The move failed; unlike the U. S. A. , France and four other delegations, which voted against, Britain joined Norway in abstaining, on grounds that "at this moment, not many Governments have recognized the new Government in China, and, therefore, it might be premature and precipitate on the part of this organ of the United Nations to take, or attempt to take, a definite decision in the near future"¹². The Chinese failed to appreciate the finesse of the argument and reacted contemptuously. Similarly, they could not countenance the retention of a British consul at Tamsui, in Formosa, although he was technically accredited to the provincial governor rather than to the Republic of China. Finally, they showed impatience over legal proceedings in Hong Kong respecting the disposition of aircraft whose ownership they claimed. As weeks and then months wore on, these instances of British 'duplicity' were held up and the British negotiating representative in Peking was unable to establish formal diplomatic connections¹³. By May of 1950, Anthony Eden was saying that "the truth is, and I think the Foreign Secretary would admit it, that recognition has in fact brought out no advantage at all today"¹⁴.

The Australian Government was also struck by the callous Chinese treatment of foreign persons and properties within China. For months, American consular and other official people had been fed

12

Sir Alexander Cadogan, U. N. Security Council, Official Records, 459th Meeting, January 10, 1950, p. 6. Also see his remarks in 460th Meeting, January 12, 1950, p. 17.

13

For discussions of these Sino-British problems, see Luard, op. cit., pp. 83-87; Jain, loc. cit., pp. 29-43; Michael Lindsay: China and the Cold War, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press 1955, pp. 10-11, 20; G. F. Hudson, "British Relations with China", Current History, Vol. 33, December 1957, pp. 329-330.

14

U. K. , Parl. Deb. , H. of C. , Vol. 475, May 24, 1950, col. 2071.

a steady diet of snubs, beatings and jailings. In mid-January the Peking Government seized former military compounds belonging to the U. S., French and Dutch Governments, and applied the same tactic to Britain three months later. This, from the American standpoint, was the last straw. All remaining American consulates were closed down and personnel withdrawn. The Chinese action had been taken only two days after the membership debate in the Security Council, and the State Department remarked that if the Communists were serious about seeking a seat in the U. N., they would need to accept the obligations incumbent on U. N. membership¹⁵. Indeed, as was later revealed, the United States then undertook some active diplomacy of its own; missions abroad were instructed to explain that in light of recent developments it was America's belief that "recognition of the Communists or any change in the existing position regarding diplomatic relations with the Nationalist Government would be premature"¹⁶.

The reaction in Australia was again to assess Chinese conduct unfavorably. Throughout most of January Spender had been out of the country. When the Colombo talks ended, he visited several Asian nations, and did not reappear in Australia until the end of the month. The fact of his absence - and therefore of no direct report to Cabinet, including his advice on recognition - in itself precluded any change in policy. Retrospectively, therefore, the Canberra Times' opinion of January 7 that pre-Colombo recognition by Britain had spoiled the probability that Australia would have awarded recognition "if given the opportunity of joining in a simultaneous announcement"¹⁷ seems unfounded. By the time Spender returned, there had been considerable Chinese misconduct in the intervening two weeks since Colombo. Had Spender not felt the need, as a newly initiated External Affairs Minister of a new Government, to tour Asia rather than flying home immediately after Colombo, had Cabinet already been able to build up a working assessment of the Chinese problem, it is conceivable that Australia might have recognized about mid-January. But the factual situation was different.

15

New York Times, January 15, 1950.

16

Philip C. Jessup, "U. S. Policy Toward China, 1949-50", Department of State Bulletin, Vol. 25, October 15, 1951, p. 606.

17

Canberra Times, January 7, 1950.

Earlier in the month there had been general editorial agreement that, irrespective of its timing, Britain's decision to recognize carried merit; the Nationalists on Formosa had no future, the West would need to live and deal with the New China, and an Australian offer of recognition should follow speedily¹⁸. Even Sir Frederic Eggleston, Australia's first Minister to China and a man who was not disposed to regard the Nationalists as fully responsible for the triumph of Communism in the country¹⁹; stepped forward and publicly exhorted the Australian Government to fall into line with Britain²⁰. By the close of January, however, when Spender reappeared in Australia and volunteered that his Government would not "for the time being" recognize China, the Sydney Daily Telegraph began to reflect a changing mood; it praised Spender's caution, reminded its readers of rising Chinese disagreeableness, undisguised cordiality toward Russia and the snubbing of Western Governments which had accorded recognition, and concluded that "we needn't be in a hurry to join their ranks"²¹.

At least two writers have attributed the failure of the old Dominions to recognize the Peking regime in January to China's mistreatment of consular officials and the requisitioning of various Governments' properties contrary to previous treaty rights²². Respecting Australia, this certainly was a contributing influence, and Spender's comment on his return undoubtedly took Chinese behavior into account. However,

18

For instance, Melbourne Sun, January 7, 1950; Melbourne Argus, January 9, 1950; Adelaide Advertiser, January 9, 1950; Hobart Mercury, January 9, 1950; Melbourne Herald, January 12, 1950. For a less favorable view, see S. M. H., January 7, 1950.

19

F. W. Eggleston: Reflections on Australian Foreign Policy, Melbourne: Cheshire 1957, especially chapter on "America and Two Chinese Revolutions", pp. 32-86.

20

S. M. H., January 9, 1950.

21

Sydney Daily Telegraph, January 29, 1950.

22

O. Edmund Clubb, "Chinese Communist Strategy in Foreign Relations", Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 277, September 1951, p. 164; Allen S. Whiting: China Crosses the Yalu, New York: Macmillan 1960, p. 26.

when he returned from Asia he was already carrying with him another, more significant set of notions relative to China: the safety of South-East Asia. Even without the benefit of his travels in January Spender, and the Liberal Government generally, would have reached the conclusion that an Asia stable and secure from revolutionary disturbances was indispensable to Australia's own protection. The Government's thinking amounted to this: The center of political gravity was perceptibly shifting from Europe toward Asia. Colonial regimes were increasingly withdrawing their control. Nationalism was widespread. New National states were emerging. Communism, at least temporarily checked in Europe, was concentrating its efforts on this unstable part of the world. Most countries in South-East Asia had active Communist movements and, in certain cases, particularly Malaya, Indo-China and the Philippines, armed uprisings were in progress. The Communists had accomplished their conquest of China, and were now exerting their influence toward neighboring countries, with local movements taking heart from the events in China. Even if China did not resort to force in South-East Asia, she held a handy instrument in the overseas Chinese populations, whom she was already trying to manipulate for her purposes. At all events, China had given quick and enthusiastic recognition to the Viet Minh in Indo-China - a sensitive danger point - whose collapse would outflank and threaten Malaya, much along the pattern of the second world war. The greater the successes of Communism, the smaller would be the resistant capacity of remaining non-Communist South-East Asian territories. Australia was on the doorstep of these rapid and alarming developments, and could not afford to be indifferent toward them²³.

Australia was not, indeed, indifferent, and her actions reflected the prevailing anxiety in Canberra. The Colombo discussions had ranged over wide ground. Their main accomplishment had been the arrangement of the Colombo Plan, providing for technical and economic assistance to Commonwealth Asian members and in which Spender personally played a notable role. But differences prevented agreement on

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See especially Spender's statements of February 8, 1950, in Current Notes on International Affairs, Vol. 21, February 1950, pp. 133-134, and March 9, 1950, in Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 206, especially pp. 623-627.

concrete security measures²⁴. By the end of May, however, after considerable negotiations with Britain, Australia met requests for transport aircraft and crews to participate in the anti-terrorist effort in Malaya, and for servicing facilities on Australian soil for R. A. F. planes stationed in the Far East²⁵, supplementary to the arms and munitions shipments which the preceding Labor Government had undertaken. At the diplomatic level, early in February Spender announced Australia's recognition of the three Indo-Chinese states. Spender admitted that these states carried the limitations of continuing French management of their defense and external affairs, but their prompt recognition by Australia and other powers "should encourage moderate nationalist leaders in Indo-China who did not wish their country to become a satellite of Moscow or Peking"²⁶. This step by Australia, and the explanation attached, carried special significance. It recognized the importance of insulating nationalist development from Communist, and perhaps specifically Chinese, influence. It assumed that the act of diplomatic recognition could serve to bolster morale and status in an affected country. It also helped to unravel the Government's opinion on the recognition of China herself. If an act of diplomatic recognition was politically helpful to friendly Government, especially Governments which were trying to maneuver themselves out of the range of Chinese Communist penetration, then withholding recognition from the guilty party, China, would seem like the logical inference. By early March Spender was justifying non-recognition of China largely on these grounds²⁷. On June 8, in his last public statement on the subject prior to Korea, he

24

See comments in Colin Bingham, "The Colombo Failure", S. M. H. January 15, 1950, and Gordon Greenwood, "Australian Attitudes Towards Pacific Problems", Pacific Affairs, Vol. 23, June 1950, p. 161.

25

R. G. Menzies, Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 208, May 30, 1950, p. 3351, and May 31, 1950, p. 3464; Alan Barcan, "Australia and Malaya", Eastern World, Vol. 9, September 1955, pp. 19-20; Henry S. Albinski, Australia's Search for Regional Security in South-East Asia, Ph. D. Thesis, Univ. of Minnesota, 1959, pp. 246-248.

26

Statement of February 8, 1950, Current Notes, loc. cit., p. 134.

27

Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 206, March 9, 1950, p. 626.

said that his Government would continue to watch developments in China closely, "in order to ascertain to what degree the new regime in Peking intends to live up to international obligations in both its internal treatment of foreigners and its external non-interference in the affairs of neighboring states". The Government had "no present intention" of recognizing Peking²⁸.

But there was another, related, and perhaps equally compelling international consideration which deterred Australia from extending recognition, although its proof is most inferential. This was the search for a Pacific security alliance which could deter or defeat aggression in the area. The fear of Japan as a potential trouble-maker certainly persisted and should not be under-rated, but the Chinese Communist presence lent urgency. Ideally, the Liberals would have desired membership in such a pact to include Australia, New Zealand, Britain, perhaps other Commonwealth nations, and certainly and irreducibly the U. S. - similar to the regional alliance scheme which Labor had unsuccessfully promoted in 1949. To begin with, then, the reactivation of an alliance search by the Liberals was contributed to by the appraisal placed on Chinese intentions. American participation could not be dispensed with, to the point that on June 8 Spender admitted that if no other avenue were open, Australia alone, without Britain and other Commonwealth members, would join the U. S. in a bilateral defense pact²⁹. The U. S. held back, still disinclined to move into an alliance until interested states in the region gave clear evidence of banding among themselves first, but prior to Korea, Australia labored conscientiously toward her alliance objective.

In these circumstances, it would have been most imprudent for Australia to recognize China, especially after January, for beyond that stage there was a general hiatus in the extension of recognition by other countries. It has already been shown that after the Chinese property

28

Ibid., Vol. 208, June 8, 1950, p. 4012.

29

Ibid., p. 4006. On the Government's pact search at this time, also see Spender's address of February 20, 1950, in S. M. H., February 21, 1950; R. N. Rosecrance: Australian Diplomacy and Japan 1945-1951, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press 1962, pp. 181-183; Albinski, op. cit., pp. 248-254; Round Table, no. 159, June 1950, pp. 280-281.

expropriations in mid-January, the United States redoubled its efforts to discourage recognition among its friends. It was about that time too that Spender was returning from Asia, somewhat disturbed about the lack of tangible security decisions at Colombo and considerably disturbed by what he had seen and heard of Chinese deportment and intentions. By the time a Cabinet decision was taken in February to withhold recognition of China, at least for the foreseeable future, there also was the decision to press ahead for an alliance. Spender hardly made a statement between February and June, in or out of the House, in which he failed to underline fundamental need for co-operation with America. Since by February the prospects for U. S. recognition of Peking were becoming increasingly remote, despite Washington's aversion to protect Formosa or to praise the Nationalists, the conjunction of Australia's two policy verdicts was natural. Even the publicly available record supports the conclusion that America was pleased with Australia's general diplomatic posture. In a speech at San Francisco on March 15, Secretary Acheson explicitly mentioned and lauded Spender's Parliamentary statement of March 9, especially the guidelines of international behavior which Spender had set down. He remarked that it was "encouraging to see growing agreement about the nature of the problem in Asia"³⁰.

The argument presented so far has almost entirely by-passed the internal situation in Australia. It is tenable that had there been no political complications which dictated caution on Chinese recognition, the Government would not have recognized anyway. The point is that the Liberal Government did acknowledge a domestic complication and added it to its catalogue of reasons for denying recognition. The 1949 electoral campaign had been bitterly fought, and the then Opposition parties had hammered incessantly on the theme of Communism, associating the Labor Government with Communist policies and Communist connections. Then, almost before it had completed congratulating itself on its victory of December 10, the new Government was thrown into the China problem. Since it enjoyed a comfortable majority in the House, it could ordinarily have expected to survive for the duration of the three-year Parliamentary term. Although it had waged a powerful anti-Communist electoral campaign, any public confusion which might have sprung from prompt recognition of a Communist China would most likely have dissipated itself by late 1952.

South China Morning Post (Hong Kong), January 8, 1950.

The potential political embarrassment lay elsewhere. In the 1949 campaign, the Menzies-Fadden parties had pledged themselves to outlaw the Australian Communist Party, and from the early moments of coming to office laid appropriate plans, the implementing legislation being introduced in Parliament in April of 1950. This factor counted in a special way. Even if the bill could clear its legislative hurdles, there was bound to be sharp and extended public debate over its propriety, fired perhaps by the Labor Opposition. Furthermore, there was always the prospect that contentious legislation of this sort would be challenged in court on constitutional grounds. Finally, and conclusively, the 1949 election, while creating a Liberal-Country Party majority in the House, had failed to wrest control of the Senate from Labor, which retained an eight seat margin there. Facing a hostile Senate, the Government could not confidently expect to carry all its projected legislation, the ban on the Communist Party included, through both houses of Parliament. If the Labor Senate became too obdurate, there was recourse under Article 57 of the constitution to a double dissolution and fresh elections for both chambers. Although the Government felt reasonably certain that it could capture the Senate in such an eventuality, the fact remained that an electoral campaign might have to be organized in considerably less than three years. The Communist dissolution proposal might not yet have been removed from the public scene and even if it had been the coincidence of hurried Chinese recognition could have been politically damaging to the Government.

What evidence exists that this type of reasoning affected the Government's China policy? While attending the Colombo meetings, Spender was reported to have had an encounter with Nehru, who was advertising the virtues of his already accomplished step of Chinese recognition. According to press versions, Spender retorted that Australia would not evince any desperate hurry to recognize Peking; she had a Communist problem of her own which had to be tackled before the Government could assume responsibility for telling Communist China that she had earned Australia's official recognition³¹. If reported accurately, Spender's riposte may have been a spontaneous flash of annoyance against a man who at the same conference was unwilling to pledge support for any coordinated Commonwealth defense planning. However, there is probably some hint in this comment that

31

S. M. H., January 11, 1950.

Spender was already aware of a delicate political situation at home; on the same day, The Times of London wrote that "the Australian Government is especially cautious in approaching the question of recognition, for it fought the election in a strongly anti-Communist campaign and is considering outlawing the Communist Party of Australia"³².

At home in Australia, as suggested previously, the early enthusiasm for recognition subsided by the opening of February. From January on, the Melbourne and Sydney Archdiocesan organs, the Advocate and the Catholic Weekly, plus the News Weekly, the voice of the right-oriented, heavily Catholic industrial groups, maintained a steady if not always journalistically responsible drumfire against Australian recognition or any weakening on China generally³³. Catholic missionaries were under severe duress in China, and Vatican sources were warning countries which had not yet recognized China that 90 per cent of the Chinese people were opposed to the Communist regime³⁴. The author has been given to understand that the Australian Government parties believed that a portion of their 1949 victory had resulted from a chipping away of some traditionally A. L. P. Catholic votes. If this was so, fierce Catholic opposition to recognition, paired with the prospect of another and early election, could have influenced the Government's thinking. It is also perhaps not without interest to notice the reactions of the Labor Opposition, which in principle had favored recognition prior to vacating office. In March of 1950, after the new Parliament had opened, both J. B. Chifley and Dr H. V. Evatt, Leader and Deputy Leader, respectively, spoke on behalf of eventual recognition; Chifley, however, admitted that he could "understand that there were many reasons" for the Government's decision not to proceed with recognition at the moment³⁵, while Evatt felt some quid

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The Times (London), January 11, 1950.

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For instance, Advocate (Melbourne), January 19, 1950, and D. G. M. Jackson's articles of January 26, March 30 and June 22, 1950; Catholic Weekly (Sydney), January 19 and 26, March 16, 1950; News Weekly (Melbourne), January 18 and 25, 1950.

34

South China Morning Post (Hong Kong), January 8, 1950.

35

Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 206, March 23, 1950, p. 1174.

pro quo might be extracted from the Chinese in exchange for recognition³⁶. In other words, even Opposition spokesmen were somewhat timorous, perhaps themselves reflecting the uncertainties of the political climate.

In the last resort, the author must report his own findings, obtained through interviews. It seems reasonably plain that in the first few months following the election there was a measure of anti-recognition advice rendered to the Government by some of its own right-wing Parliamentary supporters, and that the most persuasive argument dealt with the political hazards which recognition could entail. Because Parliament did not convene until February 22, the access that these men had to the Prime Minister and/or his ministerial colleagues was necessarily limited, but some contacts were made. Finally, without being told of the exact factors which bunched together early in 1950, or their relative weight, the author is convinced from his own sources of information, in this instance unimpeachable, that the Government did include domestic politics when fashioning its decision on Chinese recognition.

It was proposed at the onset of this study to test the contention that the Korean war caught Australia's China policy in a state of formation. More specifically, two Australian academics and a former Secretary of the Department of External Affairs have written that prior to Korea the Liberals were waiting for an opportune moment to recognize Peking, with some sort of phased approach having been evolved in advance. Professors C. P. Fitzgerald³⁷ and Norman D. Harper³⁸ have agreed that the Liberal plan was of two parts: To sever diplomatic relations with the Nationalists on Formosa, and

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Ibid., March 16, 1950, pp. 918-919.

37

C. P. Fitzgerald, "Australia, Japan and Formosa", Spectator, No. 6455, March 14, 1952, p. 318; Fitzgerald, "Australia and Asia", in Gordon Greenwood and Norman Harper, eds.: Australia in World Affairs 1950-1955, Melbourne: Cheshire 1957, p. 206.

38

Norman Harper, "Australia and the United States", in Gordon Greenwood and Norman Harper, eds.: Australia in World Affairs 1956-1960, Melbourne: Cheshire 1963. p. 214.

subsequently to recognize Peking. Dr. John W. Burton, who was External Affairs Secretary in the last years of the Labor Government and continued in that position until early June of 1950, wrote several years later that

six months after being in office, the Liberal Minister (Mr. Spender) asked his advisers for suggestions as to how recognition could be accorded in politically tactful stages, and was prepared to accord de facto recognition of the Communist Government as a first step, though not to support immediate recognition by the United Nations.³⁹

Since the author has had contact with all three gentlemen, it would seem appropriate to attempt a direct evaluation of their assertions.

Professor Fitzgerald has offered a specific item of evidence in support of his position. In October of 1949 the Australian diplomatic mission in Nanking was withdrawn. The Ambassador and others returned to Australia, but a small group, together with Embassy records, was installed at Hong Kong, undoubtedly with the view of being used as a cadre to move into China once Australia recognized Peking. When Fitzgerald passed through Hong Kong in late October on his way to dispose of some personal affairs in China, he was explicitly asked by Australian officials to examine possible embassy premises in Peking. Later in Peking, Fitzgerald received a letter dated January 5 from an Australian officer in Hong Kong, requesting that the search for embassy quarters be continued, and expressing an opinion that Australia would recognize China very shortly. In the months that followed Australia did not, of course, recognize Peking, but no diplomatic mission was installed on Formosa, even though Australia continued to recognize the Republic of China and there was a Chinese Ambassador in Canberra. The Hong Kong group was not pulled out until after the Korean war had broken out. Professor Harper also was aware of the continuing presence of the Hong Kong Australians throughout the first half of 1950, and thought this helped to strengthen his own conclusion.

Through other cross-checking the author has concluded that the search for embassy quarters was instigated about mid-1949 by the Embassy in Nanking, and that subsequent moves in this direction continued to be inspired by officials, now repaired to Hong Kong, rather than by Canberra itself. It was probably a combination of the Embassy staff's expectation that Peking would shortly be recognized and plain and simple precautionary planning, given the scarcity of adequate accommodation in Peking. In this sense, even though Professor Fitzgerald was being urged to press his inquiries almost a month after the Liberals had entered office, the Government at home probably had no knowledge of what was being done. Certainly Spender himself, who was preoccupied in late December and early January with the large issues he expected to discuss at Colombo, could scarcely have had opportunity to address himself to something of this nature, and Burton has no recollection of any instructions being transmitted through his Department. The written opinion expressed to Fitzgerald about impending Australian recognition was definitely a private one and in no way registered Government thinking, whatever it may have been at the time.

Australia's failure to plant a mission on Formosa in the first half of 1950 could certainly be interpreted as the initial step in a calculated operation, the opening phase of ultimate recognition of the Peking regime. What should not be overlooked, however, is that in early 1950 there was widespread feeling, shared in Washington, that it was only a matter of time before the Communists would overrun Formosa. Plainly, America made no moves to guarantee the safety of Formosa against any attack from the mainland. Fitted into the present context, this could well have meant that Australia, regardless of whether she favored recognition for Peking or Taipei, may have felt it pointless and even potentially wasteful to establish a diplomatic complex in a place which might shortly be overwhelmed. Secondly, probably not too much should be made of the presence of the Hong Kong contingent. The 'contingent' was, the author suspects, no more than two men throughout most of this period. Retaining them there entailed no great expense, and they could serve as intelligence personnel, appraising Chinese developments and assisting the Australian External Affairs liaison officer appointed to Hong Kong in January of 1950.

Norman Harper, 'Australia and the United States' in Gordon Green
 Professor Harper told the author that his own conclusion about a phased Australian recognition policy was based on the memory of conversations he had with certain knowledgeable persons, presum-

ably of the Department of External Affairs. Due to the confidential nature of these talks, he could not reveal his sources. Sir Douglas Copland, who had served as Australian Minister to China between 1946-48, also intimated that he had picked up the same current of thinking in Canberra, although his recollections seemed less vivid than Harper's. The accuracy of what Harper and Copland were told would naturally need to be matched with the people to whom they spoke and the sort of reasoning which had impelled these informants to reach such a deduction. In this regard it might be useful to comment on Burton's own evaluation, since almost until the Korean hostilities he was the principal official figure in the Department, and it would be reasonable to expect that if any official person knew of the Government's intentions it would be he.

This is said with full knowledge of the immediately relevant background, which requires exposition. In June of 1949 Burton was furiously attacked on the floor of the House by such leading Opposition members as Menzies, John McEwen and Harold Holt. Burton had recently but unsuccessfully sought A. L. P. pre-selection for the newly organized Parliamentary seat for the Australian Capital Territory, and the Opposition, particularly Menzies, felt this to be a breach of the spirit of an impartial and a-political public service. In the circumstances, Menzies claimed, he could not for a moment tolerate such a man serving under him as the head of a major department⁴⁰. Furthermore, under Labor and consistently onward, Burton was an enthusiastic advocate of Australian recognition of China - to the extent of having published a short article on the subject in November of 1949 under the ill-disguised initials "J. H. W. B."⁴¹

Although these considerations would appear to have disqualified Burton from any entré to his Minister later in the Liberal period, this apparently was not so. Though Spender was in the House during his colleagues' attack on Burton, he remained in his seat. Later, until Burton's departure from his post as Secretary, there is every reason to believe that Burton and Spender co-existed happily and even had mutual respect for one another. Although Burton's replacement in

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See especially R. G. Menzies, Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 202, June 8, 1949, p. 670.

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J. H. W. B., "Australia and Communist China", Anglican Review, No. 8, November 1949, pp. 18-21.



early June seemed to have resulted, by mutual consent, from the divergent political philosophy between him and the Government he was serving, he was not eased out over a quarrel on China policy or any other substantive matter. The author has heard some remarks about Burton being pushed aside in early 1950 and his energies being steered into harmless channels such as working up the Colombo Plan organizational conference in May. There may be some truth in this, but not enough to disqualify Burton from having been privy to what was brewing in Australian foreign affairs. Again, therefore, it should be emphasized that Burton probably knew as much about his Government's foreign policy intentions in the first half of 1950 as did his own subordinates in the Department. The people to whom Harper and Copland spoke, were they other than Burton himself, were unlikely to know more than he.

Burton's principal contribution of evidence in support of his conclusion that the Liberals were planning to recognize Peking was, it is recalled, that six months after assuming office (and presumably before Burton stepped down and went on extended leave), Spender had called for papers and advice on how to approach the recognition process. Burton's correspondence with the author was confidential, but the letter which he wrote, while sustaining the principle of the above contention, creates some confusion as to the timing and singleness of purpose which Burton attributes to his Minister's behavior. Parenthetically, it might be said that Burton's account of the China problem in Australia after Korea had broken out, and admittedly dealing with a period when he was no longer strategically placed, is very uneven, factually and otherwise. In any event, the request for advice on recognizing China is not per se sufficient proof that Spender was reaching toward recognition in the immediate future. Any sensible foreign minister, in similar circumstances to the pre-Korean period, would certainly have apprised himself of the limits and possibilities of switching policy gears when and if conditions abroad (and here in Australia internally as well) recommended a change. If Professor Harper and Sir Douglas were advised largely on the basis of someone's interpretation of Spender's call for memoranda, this by itself is inadequate to warrant the conclusion that Australia's policy was cut short as it was reaching toward recognition.

Indeed, if anything, Spender's own temperament would suggest a different conclusion. For most of the time he was External Affairs Minister, and including the pre-Korean era, Spender was extremely sensitive about China's international performance. But

his sensitivity moved beyond a straightforward appraisal of how such performance was damaging the outside world, or whether given types of Australian policy would serve to inhibit or foster the misconduct. There was also a strain of moral disapprobation which tinted his reactions. Chinese behavior was not only dangerous, but in fact normatively reprehensible, as he saw it. For instance, early in 1951 Copland publicly reproved the Liberal Government for having failed to recognize China⁴². In reply, Spender said that there were "strong international and moral grounds which make it difficult to grant recognition"⁴³. The inclusion of "moral grounds" was not just diplomatic rhetoric. With Spender it was genuine, and the author's own conversation with Sir Percy about China left the same and unmistakable impression of a man who permitted, and perhaps encouraged, his own perception of what was good and what was evil to condition his China policy. With this in mind, it would be difficult to imagine Spender counselling the recognition of China until such time as Peking had set aside its bellicose words and actions for some suitable probationary period - which in June of 1950 was not in sight.

In sum, Australia's China policy before Korea claimed mixed parentage: the accidental conjunction of the 1949 election and the rather lengthy and unavoidable unpreparedness of the new Government to reach a judgment on recognition; the advent of a distasteful Chinese behavior pattern immediately following Colombo, before Spender could even report to his Government; the Government's appreciation of disturbing events in Asia, for which China was held in part responsible; the pressing need to engage American support for an alliance; the potentially awkward domestic political situation which the Government inherited; to a degree, the personality of the External Affairs Minister himself. The Liberal Government did not step into office bound and determined to follow an uncompromising attitude of anti-Chinese Communism at every turn with, in Professor Manning Clark's words, "no inhibitions or agonies of mind on the [Chinese] Communist issue"⁴⁴. The evidence does not sustain that conclusion. But the conclusion that Korea somehow 'froze' Australia's China policy, removing a pre-

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S. M. H., January 29, 1951.

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Ibid., January 30, 1951.

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Manning Clark: A Short History of Australia, New York: New American Library, Mentor Books 1963, p. 236.

viously and essentially fluid approach, is equally troublesome to justify.

The 'Freeze' of the Korean War

It still remains to be argued whether the Korean war period itself created a special 'frozen' state of mind and behavior, allowing small room for initiative and maneuver. Among the questions which require some thought would be Australia's definition of the threat posed by the Korean conflict and subsequent Chinese intervention there, and the corollary definition of why aggression in Korea called for resistance. A second question would inquire into Australian perceptions of how and why exacerbation of the Korean war would be contrary to Australian interests. A third would deal with the catalytic function of Korea as a pointer toward strengthening security arrangements in the event of future trouble in the Far East. Finally, some measurement must be made of Australia's wish or ability to leave space for accommodation with China, Korea and security planning aside. If these questions can successfully be related and answered, the Korean period can usefully be regarded as a pattern-setter for later developments in Australia's policies and attitudes toward China.

When war broke out in Korea, the Government's interpretation was, at bottom, that "every Australian . . . [should] regard Korea as his business, and not as some remote frontier incident"⁴⁵. The invasion of South Korea was seen not as a narrowly limited object of Communist intentions, but as part of a calculated strategy to encourage Communist movements in South-East Asia and to demoralize the will of native populations to resist, or even more directly to serve as a springboard for direct action elsewhere. The fact that it was only North Koreans who first stepped across the 38th parallel did not matter; it was part and parcel of a plot hatched by the international Communist movement, and the Chinese were certainly and prominently featured in Communism's grand design for Asia. Spender's

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R. G. Menzies, broadcast of August 28, 1950, in Current Notes, Vol. 21, August 1950, p. 590. A valuable source of Korean era documents and statements, emphasizing the Australian position, is Department of External Affairs: Select Documents on International Affairs. Korea, Canberra: Government Printer 1950-1953, three parts.

almost instant evaluation of the invasion was, for instance, that Formosa would probably be the next target of Communism⁴⁶, meaning the Chinese Communists, while Menzies visualized a North Korean victory translating itself into accentuated Chinese-inspired and often Chinese-led revolutionary turmoil in South-East Asia⁴⁷. Rightly or wrongly, the Government sensed some Chinese connivance in the North Korean move, plus real danger that the following Communist stab in the region might be by China herself, a frame of mind toward which the Liberals had been conditioning themselves since entering office. Once the Chinese had entered the fighting and then proceeded to drag out the war until the second half of 1953, a dark image of China became even more sturdily implanted. Although a revived Japanese militarism concerned nearly all Australians in the early 'fifties, there was a hard core of truth in an interview remark made in 1954 by R. G. (later Lord) Casey, who had succeeded Spender as External Affairs Minister early in 1951. Casey had mentioned that Japan was not then, in 1954, a menace, but that Communism was. Asked if even in 1951 Australia had had her eye on Communist China, his reply was

Oh, yes. You've got to live in Australia and be an Australian to have a proper realization of the enormous change that's come over the continent of Asia by reason of China having gone Communist.⁴⁸

The presence of China in Korea and the death and imprisonment of Australian servicemen at Chinese hands there, plus the ascription to China of mischief-making in Tibet or Indo-China or elsewhere, were not the only bones that the Australian Government had to pick with Peking during the Korean period. Two items only will be noticed, but they underscore the position well.

On December 15 of 1950 a chartered Catalina flying boat, on its way from Pakistan, was forced down near China but in Portuguese Macao waters. A Chinese gunboat moved in, and three Australian airmen, all civilians, were taken into custody. For almost two

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Statement of June 25, 1950, in S. M. H., June 26, 1950.

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Broadcast of September 22, 1950, in Current Notes, Vol. 21, September 1950, p. 664.

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R. G. Casey, "New Plan to Defend Southeast Asia", Interview in U. S. News and World Report, July 16, 1954, p. 56.

years nothing was heard of the three Australians. Working through the British charge in Peking, on at least five occasions Australia inquired about the men, but the Chinese authorities gave no explanation of the arrests and no information about their welfare or whereabouts. No access was allowed to British officials or legal advisers, nor was communication permitted with persons outside⁴⁹. Suddenly, in August of 1952, the Australians were set loose in Hong Kong, suffering from considerable physical privation. Only three days before their release they had been brought to trial, charged with smuggling opium from Burma. Once out of China, they explained that they had been threatened with further and long years of imprisonment unless prepared to confess to the smuggling charges. This they gave, simply to gain freedom, although the Catalina had been empty when apprehended⁵⁰. All this was happening about the time that Wilfred Burchett, an Australian Communist and a favorite of the Chinese, was publishing a book in Melbourne repeating the Peking version of the episode in defense of China's honor⁵¹.

It was during the Korean war too that China began a forceful campaign of praise for local Australian Communists and the 'toiling masses' of Australia, as well as gleeful denunciations of the Menzies Government. At a time when the Chinese were already in Korea and Australia was caught up in the Government's effort to outlaw the Communist Party, congratulations were cabled from Peking when General Secretary L. Sharkey of the Australian Communist Party was released from prison. On another occasion, when Victorian railway workers struck, they were reassured that "all railway workers of China are closely following your struggles"⁵². At another stage,

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See Casey's statements of May 22, 1951, in Current Notes, Vol. 22, May 1951, p. 288, and April 21, 1952, in ibid., Vol. 23, April 1952, p. 194; Anthony Eden, U. K., Parl. Deb., H. of C., Vol. 499, April 21, 1952, cols. 52-52; The Times (London), September 11, 1951; Sydney Sunday Herald, March 30, 1952.

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See accounts in S. M. H., August 14 and September 22, 1952; Sydney Sunday Herald, August 17, 1952.

51

Wilfred G. Burchett: China's Feet Unbound, Melbourne: World Unity Publications 1952, pp. 14-15.

52

New China News Agency releases, December 12 and November 8, 1950.

Chinese newspaper organs applauded the Australian Communist Party's fight for peace, brotherhood and the defeat of the Communist ban measure, and approvingly featured their Australian brethren's call of "Forward to victory over warmongers! Remove Menzies from office."⁵³ It is not surprising that in the circumstances of captives being held incommunicado and accolades for Australian Communists, the Chinese were hardly endearing themselves to the Australian public, to say nothing of the Menzies Government, though the Liberals may quietly have appreciated any political windfall that Chinese-Australian Communist amity might yield.

This point deserves amplification. In March of 1951, Menzies did in fact secure a Parliamentary double dissolution, although not specifically on any obstruction by the A. L. P. Senate to anti-Communist legislation. In the preceding months the Government had steered its Communist Party ban through both houses, after much anguish of both conscience and politics within the Labor Party. However, the measure was successfully contested on constitutional grounds before the High Court, H. V. Evatt acting as chief counsel for the plaintiff Communist Party. The Government now desired not only a chance to win the Senate from Labor, but also an opportunity to stage a constitutional amendment referendum which would nullify the High Court's judgment. The Government parties entered the campaign with fond memories of how handsomely an anti-Communist orientation had paid off in 1949, and saw no reason to change course. The timing was considered propitious also, since Labor was internally divided on such exploitable issues as Communist dissolution, National Service and union ballots.

In his opening policy speech of April 3, the Prime Minister dedicated his Government to "make war on Communism" at all levels⁵⁴, and thereon let few opportunities slip by without insinuating Labor's half-heartedness on the subject. The Government's electoral campaign made small reference to foreign affairs or to China in particular but, when made, the references were carefully designed to attract votes, especially among Communism-conscious Catholics. It was about this time that a pamphlet on The Future of Australia was appearing

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Shanghai News, March 20, 1951.

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Cited in S. M. H., April 4, 1951.

in circulation. The cover illustration depicted a globe - Communist countries shaded black, Australia magnified, and a great black arrow emanating from the direction of China into Australia's heart. A portion of the pamphlet was concerned with Asian Communism's threat to the remainder of the region, including Australia: Chinese Communism was as ruthless as Stalin's brand, "both founded upon the same evil principles, and these principles must issue in the same evil policies"⁵⁵. What made the pamphlet especially interesting was that it was "published with the Authority of the Archbishops and Bishops of the Catholic Church in Australia". The Government parties were certainly aware of the Church's vehement anti-Chinese Communist position, and it therefore made sense in more than one way for Menzies to declare that

The plain truth is that there is the gravest danger of war. Labour leaders must take the Australian people for fools if they think that they have not read the lessons of Korea, and the threatening intervention of Communist China...⁵⁶

The Government was in fact returned, with a slightly reduced majority in the House but now in control of the Senate. Broadly, conviction and political advantage coincided.

For the Government, however, a realization of the dangers posed by Korea and the Chinese involvement there was only a beginning. Failure to check aggression in Korea would only whet Communism's appetite and discredit promises of subsequent free-world counterstrokes against Communist imperialism. Australia could not expect to combat aggression at her own time and place of choosing; united and determined efforts were urgently required, even on a distant Korean battleground⁵⁷. Prodded by the Korean emergency,

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The Future of Australia, Carnegie, Vic: Renown Press 1951, Social Justice Statement of 1951, p.7.

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Address of April 24, 1951, in S. M. H., April 25, 1951. Also see Menzies' final electoral appeal, April 27, 1951, in ibid., April 28, 1951.

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For instance, Menzies' broadcast of September 20, 1950, in Current Notes, Vol. 21, September 1950, p.660; Spender, Aust., Parl. Deb. H. of R., Vol. 212, March 14, 1951, p. 482; Casey, ibid., Vol. 213, June 21, 1951, p.274.

the Government proceeded along various parallel lines. Speaking to the U. N. General Assembly in October of 1952, Casey reminded his listeners that Australians had been among the first to enter action in Korea, as indeed they had: air and naval units were dispatched almost immediately after the Security Council issued its appeal for support, within weeks ground troops had been pledged, and by 1952 two Australian infantry battalions were engaged as part of the Commonwealth Division. Although the war had sunk into a stalemate, Casey could promise that, as in past world wars, Australia would "see this situation in Korea through to the end"⁵⁸, which she did.

Additionally, concerned over Chinese-abetted commotions in South-East Asia, Australia undertook further assistance. Shortly after the North Koreans' trespass southward, a squadron of R. A. A. F. heavy bombers joined the transport aircraft already committed to Malayan service. A few weeks later a team of Australian military personnel arrived in Malaya to study at first hand Communist guerrilla tactics and to make available to British authorities the jungle warfare experience of the team's members, and a similar mission left for Malaya and Indo-China late in 1952. In March of the following year, a high French official visited Canberra on Australia's invitation, from which came provision of Australian arms and materials for the French effort in Indo-China, and the setting afoot of plans to supply Colombo Plan assistance to the Associated States⁵⁹. At home in Australia, late in 1950, machinery was set in motion to raise the defense budget, improve military production and modernization, re-establish women's services, and to adopt 'National Service', under which Australian youth would be conscripted into the Citizen Military Forces (but without liability for overseas service; or into the R. A. N. or R. A. A. F., if consent were expressed for service beyond the limits of Australia)⁶⁰.

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U. N. General Assembly, Official Records, Seventh Session, 384th Plenary Meeting, October 20, 1952, p. 106.

59

See especially the Letourneau - Casey joint communiqué of March 11, 1953, in Current Notes, Vol. 24, March 1953, pp. 165-166.

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For particulars, see Fadden, Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 209, October 12, 1950, p. 767, and Harold Holt, ibid., Vol. 210, November 21, 1950, pp. 2724-2730.

The Australian Government was, nevertheless, convinced that measures of this type were far from adequate to meet the country's security requirements. Not only were these measures in themselves more token than extensive but, far more significantly, they in no way engaged the active and formal support of the U. S. What was desirable, if not indispensable, was the reactivation of an alliance search, which by mid-1951 culminated in the ANZUS treaty among Australia, New Zealand and America. There can be no doubt that nearly all sectors of Australian opinion regarded American wishes for a lenient Japanese peace treaty as a crucial reason to forge a countervailing defensive alliance with the U. S. But the Korean conflict, Chinese intervention, plus the apparent state of the West's unpreparedness to counter such Communist strokes also counted. At minimum, in Casey's own words of mid-1951,

it is difficult to say which is the greater potential threat - that of a revived Japanese militarism, alone or in association with other aggressive forces, or of a Japan taken over by an aggressive power and incorporated into the Communist empire. But clearly, Australian security requires that we should endeavour to avoid both these dangers.⁶¹

He later wrote, with the advantage of hindsight and perhaps some rationalization, that "well before the ANZUS Treaty was drafted, the spokesmen of the Australian Government identified the immediate menace in the Pacific not as Japan but as Communist imperialism"⁶². If anything, protection against Japan and against Communism, and especially Communist China, were inextricably connected. The security of Japan herself from Communist political blandishment, subversion or even direct military action, "revealed by the persistent Communist intervention in Korea", lent credence to the argument that there would be danger to Japan and ultimately to Australia if Japan were wholly exposed and disgruntled through lack of management of her own affairs⁶³.

61 Ibid., Vol. 213, June 21, 1951, p. 279.

62 R. G. Casey: Friends and Neighbours, Melbourne: Cheshire 1954, p. 73. Also see the comments in Norman Harper, "Australia and Regional Pacts 1950-57", Australian Outlook, Vol. 12, March 1958, p. 8, and in Rosecrance, op. cit., pp. 244-245.

63 Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 213, June 21, 1951, p. 276.

At all events, in 1950 -1951 Australian diplomacy was aimed at winning American support for an alliance through which Australia could gain close consultation, planning, and a promise of assistance in case of danger. Even her behavior in Korea, before and after Chinese intervention, seemed to have carried a partial design to impress Washington and therefore to attract its support. When the swiftly-taken decision to dispatch ground forces to Korea was announced, there was insight in the Sydney Morning Herald's comment that the move would lay up for this country a store of good will in America, all the more desirable because in any extension of the Korean conflict the Commonwealth must once again lean heavily on the aid of her great Pacific ally. The value of Austral-American cooperation in the field will be by no means limited to the Korean campaign.⁶⁴

Although related aspects of Australia's China policy will be raised later, it is sufficient for the present context to remark that on many occasions, while pact negotiations were in delicate balance, top Australian figures tried to explain the tie between uninterrupted Australian defense contributions, in Korea and elsewhere, and the formulation of a broader alliance system. These explanations were freely given, both to American officials and to the Australian public⁶⁵.

The negotiations leading to ANZUS's conclusion fall beyond the reach of this study⁶⁶. Within the ambit of present discussion, what needs to be noticed for the moment is that through ANZUS's terms Australia gained, in addition to regular service and ministerial liaison with the United States and New Zealand, the pledge that "each Party recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific area on any of the Parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional process"⁶⁷,

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S. M. H. , July 27, 1950.

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For instance, Spender's account of his consultations in the U. S. in late 1950, Aust. , Parl. Deb. , H. of R. , Vol. 211, November 28, 1950, pp. 3168-3169; Menzies, before Australian State premiers, Canberra, March 2, 1951, in S. M. H. , March 3, 1951.

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The most extensive treatment is found in Rosecrance, op. cit. , pp. 188-225.

67

Article IV. For full text, see Current Notes, Vol. 22, September 1951, pp. 499-500.

an obligation superficially softer than NATO's, but rightly interpreted by Casey⁶⁸ and subsequent commentators⁶⁹ as equally strong in intent. Yet in another sense the treaty created a blend of disappointment and promise for the Liberal Government. Negotiations had caused difficulty over which nations would be included in the pact, and in the last resort only the Australia-New Zealand-United States core became a manageable combination. Australia had been eager to include Britain, but American objections overrode that possibility. Strategic thinking in Washington opposed the assumption of obligations toward continental Asian territories, such as Malaya and Hong Kong, and Britain's inclusion would have violated this intention. Anglo-American differences over China have been mentioned as a possible cause of American disinclination to admit the British, but the allegation has never been proved and in any event could only have been a subsidiary factor⁷⁰. Indeed, not only had Britain been excluded from ANZUS, but so had other European powers with Asian interests, as well as Asian states themselves. ANZUS protected Australia's own integrity, but not the safety of South and South-East Asian territories, whose immunization from Chinese Communist intrusions was vital to Australia's ultimate well being. The Government's disappointment over the limited geographic scope of ANZUS,

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See Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 216, February 21, 1951, p. 218, and statement of April 29, 1952, in Current Notes, Vol. 23, April 1952, p. 196.

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Leicester C. Webb, "Australia and SEATO", in George Modelski, ed.: SEATO. Six Studies, Melbourne: Cheshire 1962, pp. 52-55; Sir Alan Watt, "Australian Defence Policy 1951-1963", Canberra: Department of International Relations, A. N. U., 1963, pp. 10-13; John Foster Dulles, "Security in the Pacific", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 30, January 1952, p. 181.

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The point is raised - and relegated to secondary position at best - in the fullest available treatment of British exclusion, Dean E. McHenry and Richard N. Rosecrance, "The 'Exclusion' of the United Kingdom from the ANZUS Pact", International Organization, Vol. 12, Summer 1958, p. 325. Discussion with one of the authors corroborated the low rank assigned to this factor. Also see the discussion in J. R. Poynter, "Britain and ANZUS", Australia's Neighbours, 3rd series, no. 27, January 1953, especially p. 2.

however, was felt to be remediable, for ANZUS could serve as a first and important step forward, perhaps a nucleus around which a more comprehensive pact could be developed, despite the broad ranging assessments of Chinese activity undertaken at early ANZUS meetings⁷¹. The position was well summarized by the Adelaide Advertiser in 1952. America had erected a series of treaties through ANZUS and with Japan and the Philippines, but "these three systems of mutual defence are, as it were, offshore alliances; they have no foundation in the countries which China overshadows", which "makes it clear that we are still only at the beginning of a general and effective design of collective security in the Pacific. The true significance of the [ANZUS Foreign Ministers'] Honolulu Conference is that it marked the beginning"⁷².

The preceding discussion has traced the Liberal Government's appraisal of Chinese danger during the Korean war and has indicated the principal lines of security reaction and preparation. But the story is nowhere complete, especially if the question of whether Korea actually 'froze' Australian policy is reasonably to be tested, and perhaps the best place to begin, concentrating on prominent highlights, is by examining the manner and force with which Australia believed that the war in Korea should be prosecuted.

It has already been shown why the Menzies Government felt that continuing resistance in Korea was in Australia's own self-interest. But the tactical questions of pursuing and punishing the Chinese enemy in his own home territory were separate matters altogether. The crossing of the 38th parallel after the successful Inchon landings had caught Australia, like most other Governments, against a background of promises that no crossing would occur without collective U. N. sanction. Afterward, especially after the Chinese presence was an established and massively disconcerting fact, Spender tried to show that the Chinese counter-thrust had been calculated, deplorable and unjustified⁷³. Nevertheless, from

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Casey, op. cit., p. 85.

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Adelaide Advertiser, August 11, 1952. For some early official pronouncements, see Casey, Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 213, July 13, 1951, p. 1709, and his statement of August 6, 1951, in S. M. H., August 7, 1951; Spender's statements of July 12, 1951, in Current Notes, Vol. 22, July 1951, p. 400, and of October 4, 1951, in S. M. H., October 6, 1951.

73

Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 212, March 14, 1951, pp. 480-481.

the earliest stages of the Chinese intrusion Australia fought shy either of preaching or condoning radical measures to blast the Chinese out of the war. In mid-1951 Casey summarized the position succinctly:

It is not our objective to threaten Communist China or legitimate Chinese interests, nor is it our objective to extend the conflict beyond Korea. I agree with a recent statement by Mr. Lester Pearson, the Canadian Minister for External Affairs, that proposals for the blockade of the Chinese mainland or for the bombing of Manchuria, about which there has recently been some discussion; must be judged in the light of the possibility of so extending the war. If war is to be extended beyond Korea, the responsibility for doing so should not rest with us.⁷⁴

Government spokesmen were reluctant to embellish these principles with comment on how, when and through whom Australia was working to limit the war and avoid overextension, although the author has encountered unimpeachable internal evidence that every available diplomatic and service channel was used, especially vis-a-vis the United States. However, in at least two related situations, the activities and subsequent dismissal of General MacArthur and the Eisenhower proposal to de-neutralize the Nationalists - the 'unleashing' of Chiang - there is interesting corroboration.

On January 31, 1951, as the U. N. was passing its resolution condemning China as an aggressor, Spender remarked that "it would be a good thing if military leaders were to confine their observations to factual military communiques"⁷⁵, with obvious reference to the man who had been urging the employment of Nationalist troops in Korea and the bombing of targets across the Yalu River. Starting in late November of 1950 and onward, the Australian press had been heavily inclined to support the Government's policy in Korea, agreeing that while resistance to aggression should not be lowered, the risk of a third world

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Ibid., Vol. 213, June 21, 1951, pp. 275-276. For previous cautious expressions, see Spender, ibid., Vol. 211, November 28, 1950, p. 3173; Menzies, ibid., December 8, 1950, p. 4079, and Vol. 212, March 7, 1951, p. 75.

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Cited in S. M. H., February 1, 1951.

war could hardly be gambled on by an exposed and ill-prepared Australia⁷⁶. But as 1951 moved on, MacArthur's behaviour failed to improve and, in fact, worsened. Even in the eyes of an Australian press which years before had hailed MacArthur as a redeemer, a man who had kept the Japanese away from the country's shores, continuing demands for radical solutions in China, peremptory and boastful offers of negotiation and unauthorized statements of all kinds were most unwelcome⁷⁷. The Sydney Morning Herald, in particular, felt that MacArthur's impromptu proposals had brought an additional complication to Australia: they were serving to drive a wedge between British and American opinion, accentuate China policy differences between the two countries, weaken the Western security partnership, and ultimately to dent the unity of purpose indispensable to Australia's survival on the circumference of a Chinese-confronted region⁷⁸.

But the Government's own replies to the MacArthur controversy could not simply be taken on the basis of endorsements in the daily press. The 1951 Australian electoral campaign began exactly at the moment that debate over MacArthur was reaching its climax. As has been seen, the Government parties were committed to waging another Communist-overtone campaign on every front. Furthermore, the electorally important Catholic opinion had hardened on China. Those sectors of Catholic opinion represented by the News Weekly were unsparing in their attacks on China and on any 'appeasers' of China. To the News Weekly, Acheson, the State Department (infiltrated by such 'evil geniuses' as Owen Lattimore) and even Truman were apostles of shame, people who were utterly blind to the profound sense of Solomon MacArthur - whom the paper elected as 'Man of the Year' for 1951. (Chiang Kai-shek was the 'George Washington of the Chinese resistance'). Not only should Nationalist forces be put to work in Korea, but they should be backed by American air and naval power in an invasion of the

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For instance, Melbourne Herald, November 29 and December 16, 1950; Melbourne Sun and Adelaide Advertiser, November 30, 1950; Launceston Examiner, December 4, 1950.

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Brisbane Courier-Mail and Hobart Mercury, March 27, 1951; Melbourne Argus, March 27 and April 12, 1951; Melbourne Age, April 9 and 12, 1951; Adelaide Advertiser April 9 and 13, 1951; Melbourne Sun, April 12, 1951.

78

S. M. H., April 12 and 17, 1951.

mainland. China should be knocked out of the war by every means available; "eliminate Red China and all the grass fires started by the Communists in Malaya, Indo-China, Burma and elsewhere will go out for lack of fuel"⁷⁹. Yet even News Weekly, or other extreme Catholic opinion, might be discounted if the public at large were unconvinced. But was it? In March the results of two Australian Gallup Polls were published and compared. The question had been whether military targets in China should be bombed. In December of 1950, 36% had said yes, 47% no, and 17% were undecided. In February, nearly on the eve of the election, 49% were in favor and only 34% opposed⁸⁰.

The Government therefore faced something of a dilemma in the MacArthur debate, and in the final judgment acquitted itself well. Just prior to MacArthur's dismissal, on April 10, Menzies and Spender made relevant statements. The Prime Minister spoke of the need to persevere in Korea, but added that Australia was "determined to limit the area of conflict. Nobody has even thought that the Korean campaign is something which gives rise to an attack upon China or Chinese territory. Nobody has contemplated it"⁸¹. Spender, on his part, went so far as to explain that his Government had frequently applied diplomatic action to counter any proposals to spread the area of conflict beyond Korea, both officially and unofficially⁸². Two days later Spender refused to comment on MacArthur's removal, but forcefully reiterated his remarks of April 10⁸³. The Government had been discreet, but its position was unmistakable, and the author's own information completely confirms the printed record. Furthermore, to the Government's relief, there were no unwanted repercussions. On April 18

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News Weekly, May 23, 1951. Other representative comments: December 12, 13 and 20, 1950; January 17, February 7, April 18 and May 2, 1951. MacArthur's "election" was announced on January 2, 1952. Also see the remarks of the Advocate, especially December 14, 1950.

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Australian Gallup Polls, nos. 744-755, February-March 1951.

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Cited in S. M. H., April 11, 1951.

82

Cited in ibid.

83

Statement of April 12, 1951, in ibid., April 13, 1951.

President Truman formally announced support for a tripartite treaty with Australia and New Zealand, and ten days later the Government won control of both houses of Parliament.

The next Korean-connected crisis which elicited Australian attention was President Eisenhower's announcement early in 1953 respecting the de-neutralization of Formosa. The Chinese, said Eisenhower, had entered Korea and then rejected reasonable gestures for a cease-fire. But Truman's mid-1950 neutralization of Formosa had come to "serve as a defensive arm of Communist China", for it only permitted the Chinese to kill U. N. soldiers with greater impunity. Consequently, Eisenhower was removing the Seventh Fleet as a shield for Communist China, though without implying any aggressive design on America's part⁸⁴. At the original point of Truman's order, the news had been received in Australia with a mixture of puzzlement and concern in some press circles, on grounds of intervention being staged in the Chinese civil war and possible Chinese provocation to enter the Korean fighting⁸⁵. The Government, the author has learned, was at the time quite pleased, thinking that a neutralization policy would serve to halt still another Communist move and possibly avoid a chain reaction; Spender, it will be recalled, commented on Korea with the prediction that the Chinese might quickly jump on Formosa⁸⁶. But by two and one-half years later some important changes had appeared, and in Australia's eyes they mattered a great deal.

There was, in the first instance, much the same complaint that had arisen over MacArthur's plans. A new American Administration, pushed by its own extreme Republican Party faction, was courting deep trouble. The 'trouble' was certainly not assessed as seriously as earlier projects to bomb China, but any military advantages which Eisenhower's order might yield "would surely be far outweighed by the political disadvantages of identifying the democratic cause in Asian eyes with support of the Nationalist regime. That would be grist for Peking's propaganda mills"⁸⁷. Again, as in the 1950-51 debate, the disquieting

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New York Times, February 3, 1953.

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For instance, Melbourne Age, August 8 and 31, 1950; Melbourne Argus, August 8 and 17, 1950.

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For a supporting position, see S. M. H., August 10, 1950.

87

Ibid., February 3, 1953.

spectre of an Anglo-American falling out, with proportionate adverse results for Australia, was prominently broached, and now was added the awful prospect that the interminable Korean war might be prolonged rather than shortened⁸⁸.

A different complication was raised by the ANZUS pact, which had appeared between the MacArthur and de-neutralization controversies. At the time of ANZUS's birth, scattered criticism had appeared about contingencies in which Australia might be dragged unwittingly into an American-inspired adventure in or around Formosa, where by then Washington had a heavy military stake. Article V of the treaty, it had been pointed out, defined an "armed attack" as including "the metropolitan territory of any of the Parties or on the island territories under its jurisdiction in the Pacific or on its armed forces, public vessels or aircraft in the Pacific". In other words, under ANZUS Australia might feel obliged to embroil herself in a conflict precipitated by some American misadventure in the Formosan area, even if in the beginning the spark had simply been the downing of a stray American aircraft⁸⁹. Hence, Eisenhower's 'unleashing' order, opening the possibility of Australian entanglement through the ANZUS connection, inspired Australian fears all the more.

Official reactions in Commonwealth capitals varied. The British and Canadian responses to Eisenhower's order were quick and critical⁹⁰. The New Zealand response was delayed and circumspect⁹¹. The Australian reaction, however, was quick yet relatively unworried.

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For example, Hobart Mercury, February 3, 1953; Melbourne Age, February 4, 1953; S. M. H., February 5, 1953; Adelaide Advertiser, February 6, 1953.

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W. Macmahon Ball, "The Pacific Defense Pact", Nation, November 29, 1952, pp. 488-499; A. L. P. critics Kim Beazley, Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 216, February 28, 1952, p. 609, and E. J. Ward, ibid., March 4, 1952, p. 756.

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Eden, U. K., Parl. Deb., H. of C., Vol. 510, February 3, 1953, cols. 1672-1673; Pearson, Canada, Parl. Deb., H. of C., Session 1952-53, Vol. 2, February 5, 1953, pp. 1638-1640.

91

Prime Minister S. G. Holland, statement of February 9, 1953, in External Affairs Review (N. Z.), Vol. 3, February 1953, p. 2.

Casey and Menzies described the action as one undertaken by the U. S. and governing only its own property, the Seventh Fleet. Menzies added that if an extension of hostilities were to result, Australia would naturally have "material interests", but neither man either praised or criticized what had been done; it was more dissociation than complaint⁹². Piecing together press comments, Casey's later evaluation and the author's own findings, a picture emerges from the puzzle⁹³. The Australian Cabinet had prompt and unequivocally reassuring information that Eisenhower's announcement was not, in effect, meant to do, or would result in doing, what its words may have implied. America was not going to launch Chiang hell-bent against the mainland, and would herself resist any expansion of the Korean war. With this in mind, there was even an element in the Cabinet which received the news with pleasure, considering the Eisenhower action as a kind of study in maximum benefit (diversion of Communist troops) and minimum risk.

There is no foundation for any imputation that in the event Australia slavishly followed the American line, or supported a powerful and risky stroke against China, or in any way sympathized with Chiang's own dreams for reconquest. The Government turned no emotional cartwheels in the manner of the News Weekly, which hailed the unleashing order as "the most heartening piece of news on the international front that the world had heard for some long time"⁹⁴. But when the 'unleashing' of Chiang came to little and a widely rumored U. S. blockade of China failed to materialize, Casey and his colleagues had reason to congratulate themselves. ANZUS, rather than bringing embroilment for Australia, may well have promoted a climate of confidence so strong that the frank expression of one party was fully accepted by another.

The Government's unwillingness to tolerate Chinese trouble-

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Casey's statement of February 3, 1953, in S. M. H., February 4, 1953, and Menzies' statement of February 4, 1953, in ibid., February 5, 1953.

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See especially ibid.; Sydney Sunday Herald, February 8, 1953; Melbourne Argus, February 9, 1953; Casey, Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 221, February 24, 1953, pp. 163-164.

94

News Weekly, February 11, 1953.

making, even at the expense of open publicity for Australian-American differences, can be derived from a dispute which arrived at the U. N. almost before the Chiang unleashing plan had stopped sputtering in chanceries and editorial columns. In April of 1953 a Burmese complaint was lodged against the continuing presence of irregular Chinese Nationalist troops, some of whom had drifted from China because of the civil war, others of whom had been recruited locally. At all events, the Nationalist authorities in Formosa were supplying arms to these troops, who were engaged much more in fighting Burmese than Chinese Communist soldiers. What stands out for present purposes was the attitude assumed by the Australian U. N. delegation, led at the time by the Ambassador to Washington, Percy Spender. Although the Western powers generally showed sympathy for Burma, Australia went farther than most in scolding Formosa. Not only was it necessary to provide for suitable evacuation or internment of the troops, but they must be denied arms and other supplies; if an arms embargo could not with success be imposed by individual countries, the U. N. must take a hand⁹⁵. Later, in September, Spender showed impatience with the slow pace at which the irregulars were being evacuated, and he plainly did not believe Nationalist professions of no more arms being smuggled from Formosa⁹⁶. Australia was active both in debate and in committee resolution drafting work on the Burma-China issue. Time and again Australia openly scolded the Nationalists, urged meaningful measures against the arms shipments, and hardly hesitated to differentiate herself from the more conciliatory tone of the American delegation. The Australian Government, with substantial press support⁹⁷, found the Nationalists' behavior embarrassing to the West and above all damaging to a strategically pivotal, non-Communist South-East Asian country. South-East Asia had suffered enough from Communist Chinese molestation without having to be drained by Nationalist Chinese inspired adventures. In Professor Geoffrey Sawer's words, "the episode serves as illustration of the willingness of the Spender-Casey regime to follow an independent

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U. N. General Assembly, Official Records, Seventh Session, First Committee, 609th Meeting, April 21, 1953, pp. 673-674.

96

Ibid., 656th Meeting, November 4, 1953, pp. 163-164.

97

See Hobart Mercury and Adelaide Advertiser, March 27, 1953; S. M. H., March 28, 1953.

line even when a major United States policy is involved"⁹⁸ - and likewise detracts from any thesis that Korea froze Australia's China policy.

Issues in the United Nations

Yet if the Nationalist troops in Burma issue was removed from the center of Australia's attempt at evolving a suitable China policy, the efforts of the U. N. early in 1951 to come to grips with the Chinese presence in Korea surely were not. By the beginning of January U. N. forces had been pushed back over the 38th parallel, Seoul lost, and the Chinese had rebuffed the U. N.'s cease-fire committee's effort to discuss terms. Within the U. N., successful efforts were launched to postpone further debate to provide more time for the cease-fire group - and thereby allowing the scheduled Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference in London to discuss and formulate new moves. Despite their separate evaluations of and policies toward China, all the Prime Ministers subscribed to a formula through which they hoped accommodation could be reached in Korea. The plan was quickly brought to the U. N.'s Political Committee and translated into a recommendation that the cease-fire group transmit it to Peking. The terms of the plan called for an immediate cease-fire and for all non-Korean forces to be withdrawn in stages; as soon as a cease-fire were in effect the General Assembly would constitute an appropriate body, consisting of the United States, Britain, Russia and the Chinese People's Republic, for purposes of discussing a general Far Eastern settlement - including questions arising over Formosa and Chinese representation in the U. N.⁹⁹

The Chinese reply was arrogant in language and made a set of unacceptable counter-proposals. As debate resumed in the Political Committee, representations made by the British chargé in Peking produced a revised and somewhat more reasonable set of Chinese terms. A 48 hour adjournment was called by the Committee to study the new Chinese offer, after which an American resolution providing for the branding of China as an aggressor and arranging for sanctions if neces-

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Geoffrey Sawyer, "The United Nations", in Greenwood and Harper, Australia in World Affairs 1950-1955, p. 123.

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Document A/C. 1/645. U. N. General Assembly, Fifth Session, Annexes, Agenda item 76. See discussions of the Prime Ministers' Conference in The Times (London), January 12, 1951, and Sydney Sunday Herald, January 14, 1951.

sary was discussed. On January 30 the Political Committee adopted the resolution, together with a Lebanese amendment, and on February 1 the Assembly took formal action. In addition to labelling China an aggressor, the final form of the resolution, inter alia, provided for the creation of an Additional Measures Committee, to be drawn from the Collective Measures Committee, and which would consider further measures "to be employed to meet this aggression and to report thereon to the General Assembly, it being understood that the Committee is authorized to defer its report if the Good Offices Committee . . . reports satisfactory progress in its efforts"¹⁰⁰.

During the month of January Australian diplomacy was put to a most severe test. Large decisions, freighted with consequences, needed to be made. They involved not only judgments about requisite means by which to counter the Chinese in Korea, but also touched on the dangers of exacerbating the conflict, on relations with the United States, and on the unity of Australia's principal friends and allies. All these decisions ultimately concerned the Chinese problem, and their handling by the Government therefore allows an excellent glimpse at how, under the pressure of Korea, Australia pursued her China policy.

Australia's endorsement of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' formula in itself supplies a strong clue. The formula clearly reached beyond an offer that fighting be stopped. It also held out to the Chinese their personal participation, on a footing with other great powers, in the prospect of discussing, and presumably altering, the then status quo position of Formosa and the Chinese U. N. seat, with possible gains to Peking along one or both lines. Indeed, as Menzies later admitted, the Prime Ministers agreed as a group their willingness "to engage in direct personal negotiations not only with Marshal Stalin but also with Mao Tse-tung"¹⁰¹. This certainly would have entailed a revision of standing Australian policy, but was regarded as a necessary price to pay in order to bring the Chinese to the conference table and out of the war. Despite wide argument in the press over the value or even

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U. N. General Assembly, Fifth Session, Supplement no. 20A, Resolutions, 498 (V), p. 1.

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Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol.212, March 7, 1951, p. 75.

morality of such a price¹⁰², Australia's U. N. delegate K. C. O. Shann defended the need for seeking accommodation: resisting aggression should not be confused with refusing peace, he argued in effect¹⁰³, although America accepted the recommendations unenthusiastically. When the Chinese rejection was made known, the U. S. assumed an unmistakably hard tone, suggesting that further approaches were pointless and that aggression would have to be recognized for what it was and dealt with appropriately. Speaking directly after Warren Austin, Shann again preached restraint: hopefully not every link of communication with the Chinese had yet been snapped, since the U. N. could not entertain sanctions against a major power without contemplating a general war¹⁰⁴.

But the game could not be played this way indefinitely. On January 19, the U. S. House of Representatives passed a resolution demanding that China be branded an aggressor. The next day the U. S. delegation complied by offering such a resolution in the Political Committee. On January 22, against American opposition, India moved the 48 hour adjournment, largely on the basis that fresh contacts were being effected with the Chinese. The vote illustrated the crevasse of opinion in the U. N.: 27 in favor of adjournment, 23 opposed, and six abstentions, including Australia, who failed to comment on the motion.

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Among strong supporters of a moderate Australian position were the Melbourne Argus, January 9 and 13, 1951, Launceston Examiner, January 11, 1951, and Melbourne Age, January 12, 1951. The S. M. H. January 11, 1951, claimed that "the London conference advocates buying off Chinese aggression", while the News Weekly, January 17, 1951, accused Nehru and Attlee of being "two prime appeasers of the year" for having induced their colleagues to accept the formula.

103

U. N. General Assembly, Summary Records of Meetings, Fifth Session, First Committee, 422nd Meeting, January 11, 1951, Vol. II, p. 484.

104

Ibid., 426th Meeting, January 18, 1951, p. 504. For Austin's remarks, see pp. 501-503. It had been reported that the U. S. had voted for the original London recommendations fully expecting to draw a Communist rejection and therefore better placing itself to gather support for its own aggression resolution. See S. M. H., January 18, 1951.

The British saw reason for optimism in the new Chinese reply carried out of Peking by their chargé, and on January 23 Prime Minister Attlee told the Commons that the time to consider further measures against China had not yet arrived¹⁰⁵ - the same day that the U. S. Senate followed the example of the lower chamber and insisted on an aggression resolution. What was Australia to do? It was simple enough to criticize her delegation for its abstention on the adjournment motion and to preach that "the Australian Government should be courageous enough to make firm decisions and let the world know what it stands for"¹⁰⁶. A more pertinent question was which way Australia should move. Opinion in Australia continued to wage its private war in favor of one course or another, but even when it divided it now began to sense the underlying problem. The American resolution, argued one paper, threatened to split the Western world and to render the U. N. impotent for future purposes. In the interest of unity, the aggression resolution must be opposed¹⁰⁷. The real danger lay in the disunity on Far Eastern policy which was developing within the Western alliance, claimed another paper, but it was British intransigence which was responsible, weakening the Anglo-American front, encouraging the Sino-Soviet bloc, and in the long run playing into the hands of American neo-isolationists. In the interest of unity, the aggression resolution must be supported¹⁰⁸.

The Australian vote was cast for the latter course. Australia saw her friends at odds at precisely the point when menacing Communism required full allied co-operation and solidarity. Australia has sought delay and compromise, but successively unsatisfactory Chinese replies had now been received. The American position had passed the stage of deliberation and was demanding action. If anyone could be expected to budge, the British were far more likely to do so. At all events, America was not only indispensable to maintaining the military effort in Korea, but her support was being avidly sought in connection with a Pacific alliance. John Foster Dulles, Truman's emissary, was scheduled to arrive in Canberra in February for talks on a Japanese peace

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U. K., Parl. Deb., H. of C., Vol. 483, January 23, 1951, cols. 39-42.

106

Melbourne Age, January 24, 1951.

107

Launceston Examiner, January 24, 1951.

108

Perth West Australian, January 26, 1951.

treaty and an alliance, and Australia could barely have afforded to make a last-ditch and undoubtedly futile stand on the aggression resolution with the crucial Dulles conversations so close at hand. Finally, Australia was well aware of, and concerned about, the war-hawk and isolationist factions in Washington, and it was reasonable for her to suppose that the longer the resolution remained unpassed, or the more defectors there were from its cause, the larger would be the opening through which these factions could drive - to Australia's detriment. Australia's choice to draw into line with America was, therefore not unreasonable, not an ignominious striking of her colors, although in the circumstances the Melbourne Age's rhetorical question "Is our new policy one of saying 'Yes' to whatever emanates from Washington?"¹⁰⁹ was.

When the resolution was carried, another and meaningful question was put: "The Chinese Communist Government has been condemned for aggression. But how now is a cease fire in Korea to be negotiated with a declared aggressor?"¹¹⁰ No one could answer with confidence, but both in the U. N. , after having accepted the American resolution, and in subsequent and positively stated words, Australia made it plain that she did not regard negotiations with the Chinese as closed, nor the application of sanctions as something to be undertaken lightly. In particular, the Government was at pains to indicate that any sanctions measures proposed by the Additional Measures Committee would require General Assembly approval (i. e. , receive full and open ventilation), that all Governments reserved the right to interpret and act upon such recommendations as they saw fit, and that at all stages the sanctions subject should be handled with extreme caution. In no way should peaceful negotiations with the Chinese be impaired¹¹¹.

Very quickly, with respect to trade with China, a concrete situation arose in which Australia needed to weigh priorities. As the result of the successful aggression resolution, the General Assembly assembled an Additional Measures Committee, whose final composition

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Melbourne Age, January 30, 1951.

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Brisbane Courier-Mail, February 1, 1951.

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Shann, U. N. General Assembly, Summary Records of Meetings, Fifth Session, First Committee, 430th Meeting, January 24, 1951, Vol. II, pp. 540-541; Spender, Aust. , Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 212, March 14, 1951, p. 481.

was 12 members, including Australia. From this parent committee a sub-committee of five, again including Australia, was organized and charged with sifting out the most appropriate approach by which sanctions against China, when and if needed, could be undertaken by the U. N. The sub-committee's suggestion of economic measures was adopted by the parent group and, in May 1951, it and later the Political Committee discussed the appropriateness and character of such sanctions, given the failure of U. N. cease-fire approaches to Peking¹¹². On May 18, the Assembly formally ratified the Political Committee's action, recommending that all member states embargo for shipment to China war supplies and various categories of strategic materials. Members were requested to co-operate with one another in fulfilling this objective, and reaffirmation was given to the search for a settlement of the Korean war¹¹³. Australia's approach to Chinese trade - before, during and after the sanctions resolution was under discussion - presents still another test of how far Korea might have frozen and immobilized her China policy.

The sanctions resolution did not, for any practical purpose, require any amendment of Australia's established practice in the matter. Shortly after South Korea was invaded, Australia blocked the shipment of strategic items to North Korea. When the Chinese intervened in force, comparable action was taken against them and apparently was strengthened following the passage of the aggression resolution¹¹⁴. From all appearances some care was taken in policing this policy. In January the Government prohibited the departure of two old R. A. N. corvettes which had been purchased by a Hong Kong concern and were scheduled to be towed out of Sydney. Canberra

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See Document A/1799. U. N. General Assembly, Fifth Session, Annexes. Report of the Additional Measures Committee. May 14, 1951, pp. 20-21.

113

U. N. General Assembly, Fifth Session, Supplement No. 20A, Resolutions, 500 (V), p. 2.

114

See Ballard, U. N. General Assembly, Summary Records of Meetings, Fifth Session, First Committee, 444th Meeting, May 17, 1951, Vol. II, p. 635; Casey, statement of May 14, 1951, in S. M. H. May 15, 1951, and in Aust. Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 213, June 21, 1951, pp. 274-275.

apparently suspected that the ships would be sold to China, either intact or as valuable scrap metal¹¹⁵.

But when the sanctions proposal reached the Additional Measures Committee early in May, Australian reactions were positively hostile. At the opening meeting of May 3, the U. S. delegate outlined a China embargo plan not materially different from the one adopted two weeks later with Australia's support. At the May 3 meeting little enthusiasm was generated for the American plan. Britain's Sir Gladwyn Jebb forcefully argued that such a resolution would have no more effect than did the previous condemnation of China, and would merely heighten Peking's intransigence and diminish chances for a peaceful settlement. According to the fullest available account, in the New York Times, "similar criticisms came from Keith C. O. Shann, Australian representative, who was reported to have expressed even stronger opposition than Sir Gladwyn"¹¹⁶. At the next Committee meeting, May 7, the New York Times reported that opposition to the U. S. proposals had virtually vanished. Jebb assumed a far softer line, while Shann, the Peck's Bad Boy of four days earlier, spoke not at all¹¹⁷. A week later, by 11 votes to none, Egypt abstaining, the Committee approved a slightly revised version of the American plan. By the time the Political Committee received the proposal, Australia was all smiles, and had even been instrumental in adding a category of strategic materials missing from the original American catalogue.

Fortunately, the story can in large part be reconstructed from public and other sources. The first and fundamental point is that Australia agreed with Jebb and the British, gravely doubting the usefulness or effectiveness of such a resolution. Most countries, including Australia, had already imposed a strategic ban on China, and the resolution would not materially enhance the position. More significant, perhaps, was the fear - as publicly expressed by Shann himself in the opening weeks of January - that China must not be antagonized to the point of refusing to negotiate. The February 1 resolution had brought a tirade from Peking and, if anything, the Chinese stiffened in the face of subsequent attempts to bargain with them. Australia's feelings were so strong that, as has been seen, she outdid all others at the initial meeting of the Additional

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S. M. H., January 6 and 25, 1951.

116

New York Times, May 4, 1951.

117

Ibid., May 8, 1951.

Measures Committee.

What then persuaded Australia to modify her behavior so radically? In the background was Britain's own handling of strategic goods to China. Like Australia, Britain had voluntarily imposed a tight strategic embargo against China when the Chinese stepped into the war. But some strategically valuable materials, particularly rubber from Malaya, slipped into China, through Hong Kong or otherwise, even after the aggression resolution had passed. In Britain herself, political damage was being inflicted on the Attlee Government's management of the problem. But from America came a chorus of protests about British duplicity. Douglas MacArthur, back from Korea and celebrated everywhere he stood, testified about British laxity in Chinese strategic trade the very same day that Gladwyn Jebb was opposing the American sanctions scheme. A large and ugly Anglo-American argument was being blown up - until, on May 7, the day of the second meeting of the Additional Measures Committee, the British President of the Board of Trade advised the Commons that loopholes were being closed and his Government would support the American resolution¹¹⁸. Britain, for reasons of politics and amity with America, capitulated.

The British capitulation had, of course, been preceded by intensive discussions with the U. S., and the Australians were likewise widely exposed to these attempts to turn their thinking. On May 7 Shann had been silent in Committee. The British cave-in certainly failed to help his cause, but at the moment he was probably without instructions from Canberra. By the time of the next meeting, May 14, some events of note had transpired. On May 10 the U. S. Senate voted to cut off all economic aid to nations which exported war materials to any Communist country, indicating the inflamed mood of opinion in America, which even the Administration could not wholly subdue or control. On the following day the Australian Cabinet met and the whole affair, including the impact of MacArthur's allegations, was scrutinized. Even at this stage

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Sir Hartley Shawcross, U. K., Parl. Deb., H. of C., Vol. 487, May 7, 1951, cols. 1589ff., 2174ff. A valuable account of these Anglo-American differences is available in F. C. Jones, "China and Japan", in Peter Calvocoressi, ed.: Survey of International Affairs 1951, London: Oxford University Press 1954, pp. 357-364. Also see J. P. F. Dixon, "U. N. Embargo on China", Australia's Neighbours, 3rd series, no. 11, July 1, 1951, pp. 2-4.

the matter seems to have been placed in temporary suspension, because urgent cables were dispatched to London and Washington seeking more advice. But the Government finally came down on the side of what was now the Anglo-American position. Its judgment, it is reasonable to venture, may also have been influenced by reports that Australian goods, perhaps of a strategic category, were finding their way into China after sale to Hong Kong. Australia wanted no repetition of the vituperation levelled in America against the British. A day after the Cabinet met, it was reported that Customs Department officials had been given further orders to keep strict watch over the matter¹¹⁹.

Australia also came to believe that, if a sanctions resolutions was unavoidable, it was desirable to avoid any less overwhelming demonstration for it than had been mustered in the aggression resolution, probably on grounds that the Chinese might think U. N. resistance was weakening and could somehow be exploited - though in the final meeting of the Additional Measures Committee Shann allowed himself the parting observation that his Government was still "not entirely convinced as to the wisdom of pressing ahead at this juncture"¹²⁰. But if unity - and especially of unbroken and close contacts with America - happened to be vital, then certainly the forthcoming ANZUS pact could not be discounted. The agreement had already been laid in principle, but a bitterly anti-Chinese Communist American Senate, charged with ratifying all treaties by two-thirds majority was, or should have been, a factor firmly set in mind. This time in Australia, in May 1951, unlike the previous January, there was no national debate. Comment, when given, reflected acquiescence and even pleasure in the Government's decision to fall into ranks¹²¹.

But what goods were useful to China? Late in 1953 the Director of Foreign Operations, in his report to Congress, explained that the U. S. had imposed and was maintaining a total embargo on trade with China, not because very kind of merchandise was directly helpful on the battlefield, but rather because an aggressor nation like China "ought to

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See Sydney Sunday Herald, May 13, 1951.

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New York Times, May 15, 1951.

121

For instance, Melbourne Age, Perth West Australian and S. M. H., all of May 15, 1951; Melbourne Sun, May 21, 1951.

be subjected to the maximum possible economic pressure, and that we ought not to supply its economy with any articles whatever, even civilian-type articles". Furthermore, denial of all trade would retard China's bid to build a war-potential base for its primitive industry. "A policy of total embargo to Communist China has been the consistent position of the United States. And the Government suggested that other free nations take the same position."¹²² At no time, however, did Australia, together with other countries, accept this American invitation to plug all commercial intercourse with China. The Japanese situation was exceptional: first came a total embargo, undertaken at SCAP direction in December of 1950. After independence, Japan was at least temporarily "persuaded" to maintain an especially high strategic list and to hold her China trade in ordinary goods within limits¹²³.

Australian trade with China in the Korean period was trivial, but as much because of China's own concentration on Soviet bloc commerce and her lack of foreign exchange as for other reasons. In the financial year 1951-52 Australian exports to China had shrunk in value to £A282,000, then moved up to £A680,000 in 1952-53, but were still considerably below the 1946-47 figure of over £A6,067,000. Yet apparently what little trade there was was not going to be sacrificed. In mid-1951 New Zealand announced that she was barring the sale of wool to China as her own sign of observing the recent U. N. resolution¹²⁴. Australia, whose sales to China at that time were almost entirely in the form of wool, paid no heed to her neighbor's example. Australia maintained close liaison with CHINCOM, the special China Committee founded in September 1952 as an offshoot of the Paris-based COCOM (Coordinating Committee of the Consultative Group), which since 1949 had been co-

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Harold E. Stassen, "Enforcing Strategic Trade Controls", Department of State Bulletin, Vol. 29, October 26, 1953, p. 571. Emphasis added.

123

Dulles, testimony, Japanese Peace Treaty and other Treaties Relating to Security in the Pacific. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. 82nd Congress, Second Session, January 22, 1952, pp. 49-50; Shao Chuan Leng: Japan and Communist China, Kyoto: Doshisha University Press 1958, p. 45.

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F. W. Doidge, statement of June 1, 1951, in External Affairs Review (N. Z.), Vol. 1, July 1951, p. 2.

ordinating the West's trade with the Soviet bloc. In conformity with CHINCOM's directives, she joined others in applying a tighter strategic list to China than to the remainder of the Communist world. She maintained export license controls on all goods shipped to China (as did Britain), allowing for Governmental intervention when and if needed. She even heard an occasional plea from her own people for a wider China trade, be it with commercial or political motive in mind¹²⁵. In the last resort, Australia's China trade policy during Korea was of course adjusted to the exigencies of the times. But it was not a policy of unmitigated restriction and surely, judging by her sentiment on the sanctions resolution, not divorced from her very real apprehensions about inflating practice into a dangerous international principle.

Problems of Diplomatic Contact

As regards diplomatic recognition and Chinese seating in the U. N., the Korean period brought no changes in Australian policy. Relations were not established with Peking and, whenever Australia had a voting option in the U. N., she cast it against replacing Nationalists with Communists. But this aspect of the Government's behavior also requires elaboration, including some notice of the manner in which it may have shown signs of independence.

Actually, the pressures of choice were more compelling for the Menzies Government until roughly mid-1951 than during the balance of the war, affording a convenient analytic break. Once the Chinese had moved into Korea, there was strenuous debate about resisting aggression, avoiding entanglement in a king-sized Asian war, and the rest. But in many quarters the debate was seen as incomplete, perhaps even unreal, unless it squarely faced the fact that a large, powerful and suspicious China could not be expected to come to terms in Korea, or to refrain from misguided behavior elsewhere, unless formal channels of communication were opened with her. When, it was posited, states withheld recognition separately, or collectively denied a U. N. seat to China, they were stumbling into two unpardonable errors: assuming that outcast treatment would not further alienate China, and

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For example, Wm. Morrow (A. L. P.), Aust., Parl. Deb., Senate, Vol. 219, October 1, 1952, p. 2392, and Vol. 221, February 19, 1953, p. 88; John W. Burton, statement of June 17, 1952, in Sydney Daily Telegraph, June 18, 1952.

assuming also that keeping her away from orthodox diplomatic tables would not hinder a settlement. The Peking Government was, for good or evil, the government of China, and the Nationalists on Formosa very decidedly were not. The conclusion: China should be admitted to the U. N. as quickly as possible, and Australia should not only support her seating but also extend diplomatic recognition. Words to this effect were not just the rantings of fellow-travellers or crackpots. The Melbourne press unanimously leaned in this direction¹²⁶, while a number of Protestant church groups, including the Australian Council for the World Council of Churches, placed themselves on comparable record¹²⁷.

Within the A. L. P. Opposition the leaning was similar but somewhat more involved. Chifley, still the Leader, was perhaps the most straightforward in expressing distaste for Western non-recognition and failure to seat China in the U. N.¹²⁸. Evatt, for public consumption, agreed with Chifley but was careful to attach qualifications about timing¹²⁹. At the Party's Federal conference early in March of 1951, the presidential address included a call for Australia to proceed without hesitation "in following the British Commonwealth of Nations lead in recognising China"¹³⁰. But the Party was sufficiently cautious to avoid dogmatic pronouncements. It already contained a number of bitterly anti-Communist Parliamentarians. For the moment, these men raised no serious complaint about the inclinations of the leadership, but the leadership could not, in turn, disregard the growing influence of conservative, predominantly Catholic elements in the Party, especially

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Among examples of Melbourne press opinion: Age, December 5, 1950, and January 8, 1951; Herald, December 5 and 11, 1950, and January 9 and 11, 1951; Argus, November 14 and December 11, 1950; Sun, November 27, 1950.

127

Sydney Daily Telegraph, February 16, 1951. For a follow-up decision by the Methodist Conference, see Melbourne Age, March 8, 1951.

128

Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 209, September 27, 1950, pp. 24-25; Vol. 210, October 24, 1950, p. 1268; Vol. 212, March 7, 1951, p. 85.

129

Ibid., Vol. 209, September 27, 1950, pp. 52-53, and Vol. 211, November 28, 1950, p. 3182.

130

J. Ferguson, A. L. P., Official Report of Proceedings of the 19th Commonwealth Triennial Conference, at Canberra, March 1951, p. 5.

among the Victorian industrial groups. Above all, Labor was uneasy about an early election and, when the double dissolution arrived in March, discretion overcame it. As the Government parties unpacked their Communist tar brushes, A. L. P. thinking on recognition and Chinese seating suddenly became impossible to detect.

The Government's own refusal to perform the changes of policy asked by its critics is not difficult to gauge. There were of course electoral considerations, with special reference to the Communist issue, which have been explained more than once in this study. Suffice it to add at this juncture that just as the campaign was about to open, an opinion survey indicated that the public by more than two-to-one favored Australian recognition of the Nationalists rather than a change to Peking¹³¹. There also was more of Spender's own moral perspective on the Chinese question - not a dominant ingredient in dissuading the Government from recognizing and/or supporting a U. N. seat for Peking, but one which cannot entirely be discounted. In September of 1950, before the Chinese intervened in Korea, their admission to the U. N. was raised by India. In the surrounding debate, Spender went even farther than the American delegation in stressing that Chinese behavior continued to be unmindful of the higher principles of international morality and, among other reasons, disqualified Peking from entering an organization sworn to uphold the peaceful resolution of disputes¹³². Late in January, it will be recalled, Spender spoke of strong international and moral considerations which complicated a grant of Australian recognition¹³³. The following March, he told Parliament that simple de facto control of and public obedience within a country did not entitle a Government to recognition.

Such a test may have been sufficient in the days of the early part of the century, but in the modern world, which has already endured communism and fascism, there are deeper issues of a moral character which we disregard at our peril; for were this test of de facto control to be the only test, then the

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A. G. P., nos. 744-755, February-March 1951.

132

Especially U. N. General Assembly, Official Records, Fifth Session, 277th Plenary Meeting, September 19, 1950, pp. 11-12.

133

Statement of January 19, 1951, in S. M. H., January 30, 1951.

control exercised by any aggressor nation, whether that of North Korea, had it been successful in over-running the whole of the Korean peninsula, or any other aggressor elsewhere, could often easily satisfy it.¹³⁴

Then again, from Australia's special vantage point, there was the compelling need to forge a defensive alliance with America, and Australian recognition of Peking or breach with the U. S. in the U. N. over Chinese seating, carried forward any time late in 1950 or in 1951, could have harmed Australia's cherished goal. Her commitment to resisting Communist aggression could have been doubted in Washington. Her ability to negotiate the most favorable terms both for ANZUS and for a Japanese peace treaty might have suffered. The Senate's ratification of ANZUS could have been interrupted by allegations of an unfriendly and inconsistent Australian policy toward China. Indeed, Australia's support for Peking, diplomatically or at the U. N., would have run counter to her other, already mentioned efforts to lay up a store of good-will in America. It is in this context that one must stop to test Dr. Burton's and Professor Fitzgerald's contention that, at Canberra in February of 1951, Australia acquiesced in a Dulles-proffered quid pro quo: Australia could have an ANZUS pact only if she promised not to recognize Communist China¹³⁵.

The first point to notice is that neither purveyor of this contention was privy to any such demand. Fitzgerald told the author that someone had told him of the deal, but he could not recall who it was. At the time of Dulles' visit to Canberra Burton could hardly have had direct access to such conversations. After stepping down as Secretary of External Affairs he had gone on extended leave of absence, and when Dulles was in Australia Burton had returned to active service as High Commissioner in Colombo, which has never exactly been the nerve center of Australian foreign policy.

The second and related point is that the author firmly understands from persons who were privy to the Canberra talks that no such proposition was ever dangled before Australia. But the final

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Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 212, March 12, 1951, p. 479.

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Burton, op. cit., p. 91; Fitzgerald, "Australia and Asia", p. 207.

and perhaps conclusive evidence has nothing to do with who said what to whom about the Canberra conversations. Because of the many reasons already given, the Australian Government would have been caught in a fit of irrationality had it been giving intimations of reversing its China policy on the eve of the crucial talks with Dulles. It cannot be sufficiently underlined that the domestic political situation, Spender's own temperament and above everything else the top-flight priority assigned to meshing Australian security with America had for months been leading in an opposite direction. Similarly, only an exceptionally myopic and naive American diplomatic mission in Canberra could have concluded that Australia was about to break ranks over China, and that Dulles should therefore be advised to resort to arm-twisting and lay down his alleged ultimatum. Since in all likelihood neither was the Government irrational nor were American diplomats myopic, little if any substance remains in the Burton-Fitzgerald imputation. Even the Canadian Government, which had both in word and action taken a more moderate line on China than Australia, and which had no election to wage or ANZUS to negotiate, was prepared to say in February of 1951 that Chinese intervention in Korea had made it "inconceivable that countries which had hitherto withheld recognition could at that time decide to change their policies"¹³⁶, and none did.

The above argument is not, however, undermined by Australia's attempts to avoid a servile and handcuffed posture on China. At the January 1951 Prime Ministers' conference Australia had subscribed to a formula which, if accepted by China, would at least by inference have included serious consideration of placing Peking in the U. N. and prior or subsequent diplomatic recognition by various Governments, including the Australian. This displayed flexibility in Australia's thinking, but within controlled limits. It should be recalled that the formula was not a piece of independent Australian initiative, and in fact received the blessing of the U. N. It was, also, part of a broad plan to halt the Korean fighting and to normalize Chinese behavior in the East. In the absence of constructive Chinese reactions, the other part of the formula became inoperative.

But it is probably not without importance that Australia, without any diplomatic links with the C. P. R., maintained her consulate-general in Shanghai until August of 1951, long after all Ameri-

can official personnel had been withdrawn, and that Spender himself, despite both the practical and moral objections which he held out against recognition and U. N. seating for Peking, never tired of qualifying his public statements. Australia did not discriminate against China because of the Communist system there; if only China would simmer down, her leper status could be removed - "We all desire to have the great Chinese people as partners in the constructive work of the United Nations"¹³⁷, while diplomatic recognition had never been excluded as a possibility, was under frequent review by the Government, and ultimately depended on China's own conduct¹³⁸.

Once the 1951 election had been fought and won, the crisis period reached and surmounted, and ANZUS signed and ratified, the Government's practical alternatives were at once narrower and wider. They were narrower because, starting in the second half of 1951, the United Nations initiated what was to become the annual ritual of shelving the question of Chinese representation. Since even the British Labor Government came round to agreeing that the question should be postponed in view of China's "persistence in behaviour which is inconsistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter"¹³⁹, Australia would have found herself unproductively and unnecessarily isolated had she voted opposite. Moreover, the British experience with recognition seemed discouraging. Britain's charge in Peking was still technically a "negotiating representative", while not a single Chinese diplomatic person, of any title or capacity, had been posted to London. When the British charge made representations to Chinese authorities about the detained Australian airmen and other Western persons being held without trial, the Chinese reaction was one of indifference. By 1952 British commercial enterprises in China were facing impossible obstacles to normal operations: they could neither carry on their business in the country, nor withdraw their interests¹⁴⁰.

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U. N. General Assembly, Official Records, Fifth Session, 280th Plenary Meeting, September 21, 1950, p. 45.

138

Statement of January 29 and 31, in S. M. H., January 30 and February 1, 1951.

139

Herbert Morrison, U. K., Parl. Deb., H. of C., Vol. 489, June 27, 1951, col. 137.

140

See Eden, ibid., Vol. 501, May 20, 1952, cols. 265-267.

In the event, small wonder that Britain's unrewarded patience with China was hardly regarded as a favorable omen for Australian recognition¹⁴¹, though the British themselves had never been inordinately sanguine about recognition and were not at bottom disenchanted with the results.

What the Menzies Government could, however, have done, but chose not to do, was to dispatch a diplomatic mission to Formosa. Australia's failure to house a mission there before Truman's neutralization order, and perhaps for a while beyond, could be explained by the widely-held assumption that the Nationalist refuge would in due time be overrun by the Communists. As time passed, however, America's interest and military investment in Formosa was extended, and the earlier contingency became increasingly remote. In these years of the early 'fifties it was perfectly true that Australia was attempting to build an ambitious diplomatic network abroad in the face of severe shortages of trained personnel, and Formosa might therefore need to wait her turn. But this could not have been the entire answer; at a time when the U. S. was elevating its Minister in Taipei to rank of Ambassador, in large measure as a gesture of its support for the Nationalists, Australia placed no one there at all.

The Nationalists have never enjoyed a particularly good press in Australia, and their missteps have usually been followed with uncommon interest. Before Korea, the Australian readership was treated to elaborate accounts of Australian ship captains whose British vessels had been shot at, boarded, and detained by the Nationalists, and whose crews had been beaten, imprisoned, and subjected to assorted indignities¹⁴². In May of 1951, Kan Nai-kuang, the Chinese Ambassador to Australia, resigned - in itself not an exceptional event, but for the fact that he proved himself a K. M. T. critic and settled in Australia. Later that year public complaints were voiced by the Chinese consulate-general in Sydney against ransom notes being sent to members of the Australian Chinese community from Hong Kong by Chinese Communist agents. Communist agents in Australia were

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For instance, S. M. H., June 11, 1951, and Peter Russo in Melbourne Argus, July 24, 1952.

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"Sydney Man says Seizure of his Ship was Just Plain Piracy", S. M. H., May 5, 1950. Also see ibid., May 31, 1950.

alleged to be watching local Chinese, determining who could pay for the safekeeping of relatives in China, and passing the information to Hong Kong. The consulate-general repeatedly asked the Australian Government to intervene by imposing controls over the transfer of private funds to Hong Kong¹⁴³. There is some, but not conclusive reason to believe that the Australian Government was annoyed by this open display of Nationalist indignity: first, because much of the ransom racket was shown to be managed by opportunistic extortionists rather than Communist agents in Hong Kong, and secondly because of the undiplomatic manner in which the Nationalists yelled "wolf", perhaps more to scare Australia about Chinese Communists than anything else.

To be sure, Dr. Chen Tai-chu, Kan's successor at Canberra, worked diligently to sketch an improved image of his country. He began a weekly Embassy news-letter, later known as the China News, and toured Australia whenever and wherever interested people would invite him¹⁴⁴. By mid-1953, the Chinese had found for themselves a powerful sympathizer. W. G. Goddard, a former Australian radio commentator and External Affairs employee, had by then begun his career as an arch-enemy of Chinese Communism and apologist of the Nationalists. He had already written, for instance, that "Formosa is rapidly becoming a lighthouse of democracy in the Eastern Seas", and that "Australia dare not betray this torchbearer of democracy in East Asia"¹⁴⁵. For his outstanding work, Goddard was decorated by Dr. Chen on behalf of Chiang Kai-shek¹⁴⁶, and in the months that followed the Embassy news bulletin became a vehicle for nearly everything that Goddard said and wrote.

Still, however, the Australian Government failed to send any-

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Ibid., November 25, 1951, and Sydney Sunday Herald, December 2, 1951.

144

Among available mimeographed speeches are "China, Past, Present and Future", at Wagga, July 22, 1952, 5 pp., and "China in World Politics", at Temora, March 6, 1953, 4 pp.

145

W. G. Goddard, "Behind the Bamboo Curtain", Australia and East Asia, October 1952, pp. 14 and 16.

146

China News (Canberra), June 4, 1953.

one to Formosa, in part no doubt because it cared little for the regime there, and perhaps in less tangible part because it wished to keep its diplomatic channels uncluttered just in case the Korean war should end and a rapprochement with Peking become possible. In any event, it was plain that the Nationalist Government did not disguise its displeasure with Australia's snub. From 1951 until Dr. Chen Chi-mai was appointed Ambassador in September of 1959, there was an Embassy in Canberra but no Ambassador. Chen Tai-chu, who served as head of mission for most of this period, was variously identified in the Australian Diplomatic Lists as "Minister Plenipotentiary" and "Minister", Chargé d'Affaires ad interim. This was no accident or coincidence; the Nationalists clearly resented being denied even token Australian representation in Taipei.

A. L. P. Politics

Be that as it may, the approach of peace in Korea in mid-1953 gave rise to fresh speculation about any about-turn in Australia's China policy. The British Government was re-emphasizing that the U. N. was not an anti-Communist alliance and, that after a Korean peace conference, the issue of Chinese representation should be re-examined¹⁴⁷. In Canada, Lester Pearson was saying that "the time is coming when we have to recognize facts realistically. One of these facts is that the Chinese Reds represent 500,000,000 people"¹⁴⁸. In Australia, even the more reserved papers, such as the Sydney Morning Herald, were reviving talk of a broadly ranging Eastern settlement which necessarily and inevitably would include Australian diplomatic recognition of China and a vote for Peking's entry into the U. N.¹⁴⁹ In the face of all this prediction and advice, the Government refused to play an open hand. Early in June the China problem was broached at the London Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference. Press

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R. A. Butler, U. K., Parl. Deb., H. of C., Vol. 518, July 30, 1953, cols. 1557-1558.

148

Statement of May 25, 1953, in Montreal Gazette, May 26, 1953.

149

For example, S. M. H., April 2, July 23 and 27, 1953; Melbourne Herald, April 2 and June 9, 1953; Canberra Times, April 4, 1953; Melbourne Argus, June 9, 1953.

reports about Australia's inclinations were contradictory¹⁵⁰. Afterward, however, as the armistice was being signed, Casey was scrupulously careful to deny any Australian aggressive intent against China. The war just fought had not been directed at the form of government under which the Chinese functioned. Australia would "watch very carefully what takes place in the next month or so in the political conference and elsewhere for evidence of Communist China's desire to live at peace with the rest of the world"¹⁵¹.

In other words, as Korea was about to be wound up, among those groping for new policies and a modus vivendi with China were the British Conservative Government, the Canadian Liberal Government, normally conservative sectors of the Australian press and even a Liberal Australian Government. The missing piece was the A. L. P. By comparison with its earlier and then post party-split image respecting Chinese policy, Australian Labor between 1952 and late 1954 presented a curious sight indeed, and one which demands rather detailed attention. Evatt had succeeded to the leadership on Chifley's death in mid-1951, and Arthur Calwell was elected his deputy. Perhaps some notice of what these and other Labor men were saying at this time would be a helpful beginning to the account.

In January of 1953, Evatt told an audience in Perth that it would be quite inappropriate for Australia to recognize China while Australian and Chinese troops were fighting one another in Korea¹⁵². Several days after the armistice had been signed, he said in a radio broadcast that it would be wrong and unjust to admit China to the U. N. "while other applicants for membership are in position in the

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Sydney Daily Telegraph, June 10, 1953: despite pressure from most other Commonwealth Governments for a general Commonwealth recognition of China and support for a U. N. seat, "Australia and New Zealand still don't like the idea". Melbourne Herald, June 12, 1953: "The Australian Government's view is that after an armistice, Communist China's Government must be recognised as the de facto government of Continental China, just as the Soviet Government is already recognised."

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Statement of July 26, 1953, in Current Notes, Vol. 24, July 1953, p. 403.

152

Statement of January 19, 1953, in Canberra Times, January 20, 1953.

queue"¹⁵³. In mid-July, addressing the Federal A. L. P. Executive in Melbourne, Calwell insisted that at the recent London conference Churchill had demanded that Australia recognize China, and that the Menzies Government was about to give in even though the object was British and not Australian benefit¹⁵⁴. In September A. L. P. Parliamentarian Kim Beazley told the House that America's China policy was more realistic than Britain's. By maintaining recognition of Nationalist China, the U. S. was providing a rallying point for all dissident elements in China, and this was marvellously desirable¹⁵⁵. The following month, Beazley was guest speaker at a Melbourne public meeting which condemned any Government move to recognize China¹⁵⁶. Again, in September, A. L. P. Parliamentarian S. M. Keon took the floor of the House to rip into any Government gesture to abandon Nationalist China, since Formosa's survival was indispensable to the entire Pacific defense line which America was manning¹⁵⁷. In October, C. W. Anderson, the General Secretary of the A. L. P.'s New South Wales branch, announced that the state Executive had gone on record as opposing Chinese recognition; recognition would be "an acceptance of [an] usurping authority which is bitterly hostile to democratic Australia and to our American allies". And yet, added Anderson, the Australian Government had committed itself to the fatal blunder of recognition, an action which would wipe out the previous ANZUS pact¹⁵⁸. During the 1952-1954 period, not a single A. L. P. Parliamentarian visited the Chinese mainland, though in July 1952 the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, John Armstrong, went to Formosa, walked the red carpet, took dinner with the Chiangs, and returned with a favourable report on the island's progress¹⁵⁹.

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Broadcast of July 31, 1953, in S. M. H., August 1, 1953.

154

Statement of July 14, 1953, in Sydney Daily Mirror, July 15, 1953.

155

Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R. 1, September 15, 1953, pp. 202-203.

156

S. M. H., October 20, 1953.

157

Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R. 1, September 24, 1953, pp. 643-644.

158

Announcement and statement of October 19, 1953, in S. M. H.,
October 20, 1953.

159

See interview remarks in Brisbane Courier-Mail, July 30, 1952.

Clearly, something strange had happened to Australian Labor. On foreign policy, and China in particular, it was more conservative than the 'conservative' Government parties. Beazley's attitude can be explained. An intellectual moralist, he has consistently maintained an anti-Communist independence. Keon too can be understood. A bright, militantly anti-Communist Victorian Catholic, he later broke with the A. L. P. leadership and became an Anti-Communist and then Democratic Labor Party spokesman and candidate. But Evatt and Calwell were different. In reading their statements in this period the impression is more of men scoring debating points than of men making serious contributions to a serious subject. Furthermore, these were the men who after the great A. L. P. schism of 1954-55 became Leader and Deputy Leader of a party pledged to a far different China policy, and Evatt in particular in 1950-51, despite his circum-
 spection, had leaned toward a moderate China course.

But after 1951 it was different. By the end of 1951 Evatt had not only successfully defended the Communist Party before the High Court, but had earned considerable personal notoriety in leading the campaign against the Government's anti-Communist constitutional referendum. After 1951 Evatt was Leader, not Deputy Leader of the Party, and hence a contender for the Prime-Ministership, an office which he coveted. To gain that office he needed to bring Labor out of opposition and into power. To gain power, he reckoned, would require the active support of the Catholic, industrial group elements in Victoria which dominated the A. L. P. machine in that state. By mid-1952, right-wing elements had seized control of the A. L. P. Executive in New South Wales. In other words, conservatives were in charge in the two most populous and politically potent states. But Evatt's behavior on the Communist issue had been vastly unpopular among the conservatives, and in April of 1951 the News Weekly had written that "to date, the disastrous Evatt influence in Labor's foreign policy, which would recognise Chinese Communism, and which by its indecisive Korean policy would, in effect, abandon the United Nations, has not gained the support of the Australian electorate"¹⁶⁰.

What Evatt set out to do was to gain the support of the Australian electorate by gaining the support of the right within his own Party, and he was able to carry his Parliamentary colleagues with

him. In April of 1952, the News Weekly headlined Evatt's speech and broadcast before the Victorian Labor Party's Easter conference. In his remarks Evatt had praised the anti-Communist stand of the Victorian Executive, complimented the good work of the industrial groups and maintained that Party differences on the recent anti-Communist referendum had been differences over means rather than ends on how best to combat Communism¹⁶¹. In time, the Federal A. L. P. 's ban on the News Weekly was raised. Labor's China policy, for one, became a combination of rightists speaking out of conviction, leftists speaking not at all, and center men, such as the Leader and Deputy Leader, flicking japs at the Government in the hope that 1) their swings would be noticed and applauded by the right wing, and 2) some of them would land on the Government's chin and perhaps draw some electoral blood. On one occasion in Perth Evatt was confiding to a small circle of friends that of course Australia's China policy needed a realistic overhaul. There would need to be recognition, a vote for Peking in the U. N., etc. Then a stranger approached the group. Discovering that the newcomer was a newsman, Evatt reversed gears and began to preach against the very proposition he had just laid down. The story, so typical of Evatt's tactics at the time, comes from a person who sat through the entire episode. As the 1954 election approached, Evatt stoked the right wing stoves with all his might. He was the very model of the modern anti-Communist militant. He sought out B. A. Santamaria, even hounded him, in search of support, advice, and a fraternal bon mot. He called on Dr. Daniel Mannix, Archbishop of Melbourne and a great political as well as religious force in Australian life. He offered a cabinet seat to Stan Keon, one of the hardest anti-China men in the Party (and is alleged to have promised the same portfolio to two other men). To Evatt, these were the very nuts and bolts of political necessity.

The comings and goings of Dr. H. V. Evatt did not go unnoticed, and his fawning approach to the Party's right was assailed by no less a figure than John Burton¹⁶². The unsuccessful electoral bid

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Address of April 13, 1952, in ibid., April 16, 1952.

162

Statement of August 2, 1953, in S. M. H., August 3, 1953. Also, for instance, J. A. McLaren's letter to ibid., October 23, 1953; Alan Barcan "Australian Labour Party and China", Eastern World, Vol. 8, May 1954, pp. 15-16.

of May 1954 and the subsequent eruption within the A. L. P. are not immediately relevant to this stage of the Party's behavior. But it should be noticed that subsequent A. L. P. writing admitted that 1952-54 was an abnormal phase in the Party's development. Once the Party had split and a left-oriented foreign policy emerged at the Hobart Federal conference of March 1955, Labor, the A. L. P. (grouped/divested) organ in Victoria praised the new look by showing it was not a new look at all, but a return to the tried and true days of Ben Chifley, who had urged the recognition of China in 1950 and 1951. The article was revealingly entitled "The Chifley Policy Still Lives"¹⁶³. In an adjacent issue of Labor, A. L. P. Parliamentarian Clyde Cameron reminded readers that in 1954 News Weekly had backed Evatt, "but, of course, Dr. Evatt was then supporting their policy of non-recognition of China; of opposition to issuing passports to Australian citizens believed to be communists; and A. L. P. interference in the internal affairs of trade unions"¹⁶⁴. At all events, Labor's political requirements in 1952-54 made small contribution to a sober national appraisal of Chinese recognition and U. N. seating policy. There was no doubt, wrote the Sydney Morning Herald in September of 1953, that Australia's attitude to post-Korea China required review, and that the Labour Party will have to produce better arguments than Dr. Evatt has so far done to justify a reversal of the attitude [previously] taken up by Mr. Chifley and endorsed by Dr. Evatt.¹⁶⁵

Passport Policy

The final aspect of the China problem in Australia during the Korean period - the right of Australians to visit China - pulls together many of the strands evident in previous discussion, especially insofar as dilemmas of choice were thrown upon the Government and political opportunity opened to the Opposition. From the beginning of war in Korea, even before the Chinese intervention, the Liberal Government tried to act the role of juggler, balancing its passport policy between the extremes of restriction and permissiveness. A young Australian Communist was invited by the Chinese youth movement to participate

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Labor (Melbourne), May 1956.

164

Ibid., February 1956.

165

S. M. H., September 11, 1953.

in Chinese National Day celebrations. At about the same time the wife of Ernest Thornton, the former General Secretary of the Federated Ironworkers Association who for some period had been serving in Peking on the Australasian Liaison Bureau of the World Federation of Trade Unions, expressed a wish to join her husband in China. No move was made to interfere with Mrs. Thornton, but the Government refused a passport to the young man. Harold Holt, then Minister for Immigration, explained that on the advice of the Security Service he had denied the passport without hesitation; the trip would have abetted "the international conspiratorial network of which the Australian Communist Party is a part", but subsequently added that, in future, passports for Australian Communists wishing to travel abroad would be withheld only if security precautions required it¹⁶⁶.

Several weeks later, the Government decided that some consistent yet pliable guidelines were needed to govern future situations. Australian passports would not be issued to persons, Communist or otherwise, desiring to visit any Communist countries unless special and convincing reasons were given. If an applicant had a legitimate reason and was not a security risk, endorsement of a passport would receive consideration. The policy would be operative for a one-year period and then re-examined¹⁶⁷. Interestingly, previous Labor and Liberal Governments alike had refused passports for political reasons: at the special request of the Indian Government, Australian passports had not been valid for travel there by Communists¹⁶⁸. Now, on broader grounds, the Australian Government was trying to rationalize its own approach to passports.

By the end of November, 1951, the Government had reviewed its policy and found it wanting. The earlier method of excluding undesirable persons from visits to Communist countries had shown itself subject to circumvention, while serious delay and inconvenience had been brought to those who held legitimate grounds for travel into Com-

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Statements of July 21 and 23, 1950, in *ibid.*, July 22 and 24, 1950.
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Holt, statement of August 31, 1950, in *ibid.*, September 1, 1950; and Aust., *Parl. Deb.*, H. of R., Vol. 209, October 3, 1950, p. 207.
168

Holt, *ibid.*, Vol. 207, May 10, 1950, p. 2348, and May 11, 1950, p. 2480.

munist areas. Under a new approach, as before, persons would be asked to declare the object of their journey, but would immediately be granted valid passports instead of having to wait while security checks were being conducted¹⁶⁹. For practical purposes, of course, the new policy was tantamount to no restriction at all, be it to China or elsewhere, despite the continuation of aggravated warfare in Korea.

In May of 1952 it came to light that five Australians had been granted passports for travel to Peking, to attend meetings preparatory to a full-scale peace conference scheduled for the same city later in the year. There were no Communists in the delegation, and in fact four were formal members of the A. L. P. Within the delegation were a Methodist clergyman, a social and temperance worker, an agricultural specialist, a businessman and, above all, John Burton. Speaking for the group, Burton said he and his colleagues were convinced that the preparatory conference represented a genuine effort to break the Korean stalemate and to improve Chinese-Western relations generally: "As such, the opportunities presented by such a conference should not be missed. Equally, if the conference is a propaganda stunt, that should be exposed."¹⁷⁰ What followed was months of almost wild controversy. The Government and Opposition sniped at one another relentlessly. Government supporters openly fought their own ministers. Members were constantly rebuked and even expelled from the House. Political smears fell like over-ripe fruit from a loaded tree on a windy day. The Government swayed back and forth. It contradicted itself. It contributed to one of the most bizzare episodes in recent Australian history. It was a sorry performance almost all the way round.

The issue was joined by a volley of protests both from Government backbenchers¹⁷¹ and the Labor Opposition, although in time nearly everyone was accusing everyone else of something shameful. The

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Holt, *ibid.*, Vol. 215, November 29 and 30, 1951, pp. 3148-3149.

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Statement of May 16, 1952, in *S. M. H.*, May 17, 1952.

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For backbench criticisms, see Hugh Robertson, *Aust., Parl. Deb.*, H. of R., Vol. 217, May 6, 1952, p. 9; Hubert Anthony, *ibid.*, May 20, 1952, pp. 517-518; W. C. Wentworth, *ibid.*, p. 518; Alexander H. Downer, *ibid.*, p. 465; Henry Gullett, *ibid.*, pp. 508-509.

gravamen of Labor's charge against the Government was that it was allowing Australians to attend a bogus, Chinese Communist-sponsored and directed conference, at a time when China was perpetrating aggression in Korea and was killing Australians. Just how honest was the Government when it thumped its chest and proclaimed unflinching opposition to Communism? Could it not perceive that the Peking meetings were designed to immerse the gullible in an ocean of fabrications about who was really responsible for the distracted state of affairs in Asia? The Government probably had ample power under the constitution to withhold passports, the critics continued. If it had doubts, it should block the passports and then discover if judicial opinion sustained it. At all events, it should not seek cover behind a screen of legal inhibitions¹⁷². The Government's reply was that its own legal advice suggested that it lacked the constitutional authority to deny passports, save possibly under the defense power of the constitution, which it was loath to invoke. For Holt, however, what seemed to matter was that his Government had "always adhered to the principle that we should never restrict the movement of our citizens in time of peace", and he made "no apology for it. I am glad to think that a Liberal government stands true to liberal principles on an issue of this kind"¹⁷³. The defense of legal incompetence to withhold passports hardly coincided with the same Minister's restrictive policy of 1950-51, but Holt did not care to show how and why what had been possible before was probably impossible now. Indeed, Holt's brave and liberal words stood in contrast to Casey's, which were largely concerned with identifying the Burton band as a "lunatic fringe" which had allowed itself to be duped by a cunning and conspiratorial Communist China - a point he decorated at some length¹⁷⁴. Holt and Casey, two Liberal ministers, were barely speaking the same liberal language. Many Government supporters were subverting rather than

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For instance, Evatt, *ibid.*, pp. 510-513; Calwell, *ibid.*, p. 516; Keon, *ibid.*, June 3, 1952, pp. 1290-1292; Calwell, *ibid.*, pp. 1295-1297; Beazley, *ibid.*, June 4, 1952, pp. 1297-1298.

173

Ibid., May 20, 1952, p. 513. Also see Holt, *ibid.*, June 3, 1952, pp. 1292-1295; statement of May 17, 1952, in Sydney Sunday Herald, May 18, 1952.

174

Aust. Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 217, May 20, 1952, p. 465, and June 4, 1952, pp. 1366-1367.

supporting the Government, both in Parliament and in the party rooms¹⁷⁵.

Perhaps the whole affair might have been dampened down had it not been for the adventures and observations of the Burton group. It all started with the unhappy publicity, complete with photographs, of the Peking-bound delegation boarding the same aircraft in Sydney which was being used to ferry Australian troops to Korea via Hong Kong. Once in China, the delegation broadcast over radio Peking, giving a taste of things to come. One by one, the Australians told of the awakening which they were experiencing. Religious freedom was flourishing in China, and Christian churches were pulling their weight in programs of reform. The Americans had committed unspeakable acts of germ warfare in Korea. When the delegation returned home, Burton promised, he would "present a basis on which friendly Australian-Chinese relations can be established, and perhaps a basis for wider understandings"¹⁷⁶.

When they did return home, the Australian delegates immediately set out to educate their countrymen on what were the facts of life. They insisted they had gone to Peking with a healthy skepticism, but were not convinced and impressed. The meetings had been conducted on the basis of open and forceful discussion, and the Australians were able to bring amendment to objectionable features of certain resolutions. But at bottom, what they wanted to convey was their impressions of China and of the proper solutions to international tensions. G. R. Van Eerde, the Methodist clergyman, extolled the peaceful and constructive efforts found everywhere in China. "Love of peace," he remarked, "as a theme in education, is an important reason why about 340 million people in China last year endorsed the appeal for a Five Power Peace Pact opposing the re-armament of Japan." In his unbiased Christian judgment, "after witnessing what is going on in China today, the thought came to me time and again that maybe this is how the Kingdom of God will come to earth, in an unexpected way and through unexpected channels, like the Babe at Bethlehem 2,000 years ago."¹⁷⁷

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For a report of disaffection within the Government parties, see S. M. H., May 22, 1952.

176

Cited in ibid., June 12, 1952. Also see earlier reports of the delegation's reactions in ibid., June 9, 1952.

177

G. R. Eerde, in John W. Burton, et al.: We Talked Peace with Asia, Sydney: 1952, p. 12.

Burton did not dwell on Godly Kingdoms or Bethlehem Babes, but he did indict the West for being the real mischief-maker in Asia. For instance, asked Burton, why except for reasons of fostering feudalism and injustice "are [there] American troops in Burma and Formosa, and why does America have bases in Tokio, Korea, Formosa, Hong Kong and Burma - the whole semi-circle around China?"¹⁷⁸ He never did explain what he meant by his Burmese and Hong Kong illustrations. What mattered was what China was like:

I am not sure what is meant by a Communist country. If religious freedom, family life, freedom of expression and freedom of association are tests, then I do not believe that China is a Communist country. If the test is whether the revolution was directed against the owners of capital, again China is not Communist because the revolution was directed against only those workers and capitalists whose motive was their own gain, and who used corruption, exploitation including serfdom, and gangsterism as means to their ends.¹⁷⁹

Australia could help redress the misconceptions and misguided policies animating her own people. Australia, Burton maintained, should support U. N. principles to the hilt, resist colonialism and feudalism, recognize China, trade with all countries without any embargo, and refuse to follow America slavishly¹⁸⁰.

With the tidings that peace rather than war with China was achievable, the collection of a delegation to the full Peking conference in October was quickly placed in motion. Support arrived from a number of quarters, including Dr. J. J. Booth, Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne¹⁸¹, and Lord (Michael) Lindsay, a China specialist from the Australian National University¹⁸². The Government had to

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Burton, in ibid., p. 6.

179

Burton, in Australia-China News, Victorian Branch, Australia-China Society, August 1952, p. 3.

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We Talked Peace with Asia, pp. 7-8.

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S. M. H., June 16, 1952.

182

Ibid., June 21, 1952.

decide what to do about passports, but this time against the earlier background of political screws having been turned by both its opponents and party kinsmen, the types of reports brought home by Burton and his friends, and against its own assessment of what had been un-animously resolved at Peking for further embroidery in October: germ warfare in Korea, a militaristic revival in Japan, suppression of legitimate nationalist movements in Indo-China and Malaya¹⁸³. Indeed, Burton's group had not been the first Australians to visit China under the generous passport system and with embarrassment to the Government. By the time that late 1952 had appeared, a left-wing trade union delegation had paid a call¹⁸⁴, a dozen or so Australian Communists had gone to China for extensive indoctrination¹⁸⁵, and Wilfrid Burchett was sending back reports and book and article manuscripts which outdid even the Burton mission in their unvarnished praise for China and untempered criticism of Western policies¹⁸⁶. Informal pressures by Government supporters on their own Ministers intensified. Within the newly established Parliamentary Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs (with which the A. L. P. has never associated itself), a report on the forthcoming Peking conference was produced. The whole scheme was denounced as a piece of Communist stage-management, and Australian participation, be it by Communists or non-Communists, was ridiculed for its futility in being able to advance the cause of reasonable relations with China¹⁸⁷. This con-

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For a resumé of discussions and resolutions enacted at the conference, see Important Documents of the Peace Conference of the Asian and Pacific Regions, Peking: Conference Secretariat 1952?

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. See Tom Wright: Australians Visit People's China, Sydney: Federal Council, Sheet Metal Working, Agricultural Implement and Stovemaking Industrial Union of Australia 1952.

185

See Herbert Passin: China's Cultural Diplomacy, New York: Praeger 1962, p. 56, and Denis Warner: Hurricane from China, New York: Macmillan 1961, p. 154.

186

Burchett, op. cit., passim, and News from China, Banksia Park, Vic: World Unity Publications 1951, passim.

187

"First Report from the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs Relating to the Peking Peace Conference", Parliamentary Papers, General, Sessions 1951-52-53, Vol. II, pp. 487-494.

stellation of events convinced the Government it would need to navigate a different course than in May.

But it bungled the job from the very beginning. Signs of the Government's stumbling ways were evident as early as late June. Burton had been the first delegation member to reappear in Australia, and had done so without incident. When he met his colleagues at Sydney airport, all their literature and notes were confiscated by customs officials, who told Burton this had been done "on direction"¹⁸⁸. A day later a Government spokesman denied that the Department of Trade and Customs had issued instructions to seize the papers¹⁸⁹, and two days afterward they were returned without comment or apology.

Then on September 10, the Government announced its passport policy. Holt and Casey were shunted aside, and the Prime Minister himself made the explanation. In effect, he said that the forthcoming conference was rigged to further Communist aims in Asia, "designed as an instrument of war" rather than peace. Any association by Australians with the conference would be contrary to Australia's best interests, and passports would be denied. However, Menzies added, no general passport restriction was contemplated, and travel to Communist countries would in future be treated on an ad hoc basis¹⁹⁰. Suddenly, it seems, the Government discovered it owned the power to deny passports, which was a return to the 1950-51 position and a reversal of the position assumed and so briskly defended earlier in 1952. No attempt was made to explain these gyrations. On political grounds the Government had decided to shift course, though 'the law' was made to look like a neurotic chameleon.

Still, the Government had no peace. One final act remained to be played. Some of the 30 original Australian delegates to China simply admitted defeat and did no more. A few Australians, carrying British passports, were not obstructed by the Government and went on

188

S. M. H., June 23, 1952.

189

Ibid., June 24, 1952.

190

Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol 218, September 10, 1952, pp. 1186-1187.

to Peking. But 11 or 12 determined individuals decided to defy the Government, and to make for China without benefit of passports. They faced two handicaps: major Australian air and shipping lines did not carry passportless people (although it was not an offense to leave Australia without a passport) and, on September 15 Menzies said it was the "general idea" to place every obstacle in the path of prospective Australian delegates¹⁹¹. What ensued was a ludicrous game of cops and robbers, badly acted on both sides.

The story can be pieced together from both printed sources and the author's own interview with Dr. Clive Sandy of Melbourne, one of the determined dozen, who had no objection to being quoted and identified. The intrepid Australians left for Brisbane from Sydney and Melbourne, travelling under assumed names but in full view of shadowing Australian security agents. The plan was to take a flying boat to Townsville, where waterside workers were presumed to be holding a ship which would carry the party away. But the signals became crossed, because no ship was available to them. Some returned home dejected, others kept on, getting as far as Cairns on the northern Queensland coast in the hope of making some on the spot arrangements. "Through all this," ran one account, "Cabinet had taken on the aspect of an air operations room during the Battle of Britain, with the shadowing security men turning in regular reports on the whereabouts of the Pokes."¹⁹² The R. A. N. had been instructed to watch for any small ships approaching or leaving the Australian coast. Civil aviation officials sent one message which read: "Offer no facilities for boarding other plane. Refuse launch transport."¹⁹³ According to Dr. Sandy, R. M. Ansett told him afterward that he had been asked by Government spokesmen not to permit his airline to fly any of the wandering Australians to Hayman Island, off the Queensland coast. There was suspicion that a Soviet submarine would be lying off shore, waiting to carry them to China. Happily for Sandy and his compatriots, the Government's pursuit did not include acceptance of the News Weekly's advice: Australia should have declared war on the Communists fighting in Korea long before, and "it would then not

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Cited in S. M. H., September 16, 1952.

192

News Weekly, September 24, 1952.

193

S. M. H., September 19, 1952.

only have cast-iron authority to prevent anyone from attending a conference in the enemy's capital but, if necessary, the legal right to hang anyone who did."¹⁹⁴

Although the Government had refused passports for the conference travellers and then went to rather amusing extremes to enforce its ban, its subsequent policy was almost entirely a return to the permissive days. In sum, even Communists were allowed to travel to peace congresses in and outside the Soviet bloc. They were even allowed to visit China, be it as general tourists or as participants at Chinese labor conferences and the like. The Government justified its position by asserting that the September-October 1952 situation had been special, in that Australians were then going to a Chinese conference explicitly concerned with undermining and villifying the West. But the old Harold Holt small-l liberalism was very much in evidence, for "the Commonwealth Government does not want to turn Australia into a prison house"¹⁹⁵. Australian traffic to China became fairly heavy, be it routed through Moscow or otherwise, and even Dr. Sandy managed to reach Peking later in 1952 and without further Government interposition. Although China's Australian visitors wrote glowingly of what they saw and/or nastily of Western policies¹⁹⁶, their freedom from harassment was complete.

Throughout the episode the Government had evinced a certain disingenuousness of argument respecting the legal position governing passports. It had at one time appeared to be speaking with two voices - Holt's and Casey's. Someone made a botch of the seizure of the preparatory conference delegates' papers. The dragnet methods and

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News Weekly, September 24, 1952.

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Howard Beale, statement of October 4, 1952, in Sydney Sunday Herald, October 5, 1952. Also see Neil O'Sullivan, Aust., Parl. Deb., Senate, Vol. 219, October 7, 1952, p. 2502; Holt, Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 220, October 16, 1952, p. 3273.

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See Elizabeth Vasilieff; Peking-Moscow Letters, Melbourne: Australasian Book Society 1953; Allan D. Brand: I Preached Peace in U. S. S. R. and China, Sydney: N. S. W. Peace Council 1953. For an account of China written by a British passport-bearing Australian who attended the Peking Conference, see Helen G. Palmer: Australian Teacher in China, Sydney: Teachers' Sponsoring Committee 1953?

pursuit of Australians across the length of the country verged on a burlesque. But, broadly taken, the Government proved itself liberal as well as Liberal, even in the face of massive criticism inside and outside of its own supporting groups. Its policy on travel could not, in all justification, be regarded as just another stereotypically rigged symptom of the Korean war and of the Chinese presence.

The controversial Dr. Burton also provides a transition to some explanation of Labor's conduct during the passport debate. Late in March of 1951 Burton suddenly and without instructions departed from the Australian High Commission in Ceylon. The moment he alighted in Australia he announced his intention of seeking A. L. P. endorsement for a Parliamentary seat. Additionally, while he was still a public servant and a High Commissioner, he quickly accused his own Government of having resorted to mass hysteria to justify coercive legislation. Menzies was an arch-enemy of all socialist countries, and had concocted an atmosphere of fear conducive to waging war against China, Japan, Russia or some British Commonwealth country with a socialist Government¹⁹⁷. Within a matter of days Burton won pre-selection to the N. S. W. seat of Lowe and then resigned from the public service entirely, surrounded by a storm of controversy which his return and remarks had blown up.

Almost as soon as Labor had shown its alarm over the award of passports, Arthur Calwell selected Burton as a target and claimed that he should resign from the A. L. P. if he intended to visit China, since "no man can serve two masters. No person can honestly belong to the Labour Party and attend what, after all, can only be a Communist - inspired - if not Communist controlled - conference to weaken the Western democracies in their struggle with the Communist world"¹⁹⁸. Calwell's challenge was, strictly speaking, consistent with established Party policy, which prohibited, on pain of expulsion, united front activity with Communists. As recently as March 1951 the triennial Federal conference had re-affirmed this principle and adopted an

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Statement of March 26, 1951, in S. M. H., March 27, 1951.

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Statement of May 17, 1952, in Sydney Sunday Herald, May 18, 1952. Burton later had his pre-selection for the Lowe seat withdrawn but, after a personal appearance before the N. S. W. Executive, was not expelled from the Party.

Executive resolution which denounced "so-called Peace Councils" and warned all members "against being involved with appeals or organizations which exploit the desire for peace" in Communism's interests¹⁹⁹, and during the balance of its unity era the A. L. P. echoed these sentiments frequently²⁰⁰.

But Calwell may also have been trying to cushion the political punches which dissident Government supporters might have wished to throw by fact of Burton's A. L. P. connections and ties with Evatt, the A. L. P.'s Leader. This, in fact, is precisely what they tried to do, and the debate over passports degenerated into the exchange of heated irrelevancies about whether Evatt, who had defended Communists before the High Court and at the constitutional referendum, had not in truth also spawned and nourished his protege Burton, the leader of the madcap delegation to Peking²⁰¹. Even more fundamentally, Labor's attempt to dissociate itself from Burton and to beat the Government with one of its own political sticks, i. e. softness on Communism, was probably a manifestation of the new conservatism which had settled over the Party by then. Evatt was among the leaders when the A. L. P. tried to embarrass the Government on the passport issue. In May of 1953, as a Senate election drew near, Labor Senator W. P. Ashley again launched a soft-on-Communism attack against the Government because of Australian trips to China, with Evatt and Calwell joining in support for their colleague²⁰². No wonder that the News Weekly, champion Australian enemy of Burtonism, Communism, and various and sundry other left-looking evils, should have taken pride in Evatt's "clearly and unequivocally" stated position on the passport issue²⁰³, and indeed that Evatt and his Party should have felt comfort rather than remorse in being congratulated by this new and

199 with America, for instance, reflected the position well. It had been sought before Korea.

A. L. P., Official Report of Proceedings, p. 10.

200 including by stronger discomfure over Chinese intentions. The

For instance, see A. L. P., Federal Executive Report to the 20th Federal Conference, at Adelaide, January 1953, pp. 23-24; A. L. P., State of Victoria, Central Executive Report, 1952-53, p. 6; "Communist Peace Propaganda Condemned", Labor, December 1953.

201 first priority goal which was involved.

See the exchange between Henry Gullett and Evatt, Aust., Parl. Deb., H. of R., Vol. 217, May 20, 1952, pp. 508-510.

202

See statements and accounts in S. M. H., May 5, 6 and 7, 1953.

203 John W. Burton: The Light Grows Brighter, Sydney, Morgans

News Weekly, September 17, 1952. Also see ibid., May 28, 1952.

politically useful ally. In retrospect, however, the canvas assumes a different shade. After the great A. L. P. split, Burton published a pamphlet in which he defended various canons of democratic socialism and the foreign policy planks of the Hobart program. In his introduction to the work, H. V. Evatt endorsed its contents in full and wrote of Burton as follows:

John Burton has already made contributions of value to the defence of basic freedoms in Australia. He resisted the onset of McCarthyism and helped to beat it back. Like many others, he underwent and surmounted the "ordeal by slander" which is the very essence of McCarthyism. He took a leading part in the cultivation of true friendship of Australia with the new nations of Asia, including India, China, [sic], Indonesia and Ceylon.²⁰⁴

Time, and a party split, heals all things.

Summing Up

Australia's China policy was not, properly speaking, thrown into a deep freeze by the Korean war. For its first six months in office the Menzies Government searched about, trying to assess the impact of Chinese Communism and to evolve suitable policies. But the guidelines on both counts were already on hand when war came, and the Korean years were largely a continuation of earlier perspectives. This is not to say that Korea had no effect. Far from it. What it did was to stimulate, but not originate, Australian conviction that aggressive Chinese activity threatened Australian interests, and that powerful remedies were required. The quest for an alliance with America, for instance, reflected the position well. It had been sought before Korea, but its achievement was heightened afterward, including by stronger discomfort over China's intentions. The achievement of ANZUS was therefore very much a part, and a successful part, of Australia's China policy, and if Australian attitudes in 1951 on Chinese questions arising in the U. N., or with respect to recognition, were in any way scaled to reach this goal, it was still a first priority goal which was involved.

Nonetheless, actions such as ultimate endorsement of the

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John W. Burton: The Light Grows Brighter, Sydney: Morgans Publications 1956?, p. 5.

aggression and economic sanctions resolutions, or non-criticism of the Eisenhower de-neutralization order, were palpably not the reflex motions of a deaf and dumb Government, waiting for instruction from Washington. Australia did work to moderate and restrain American behavior, and on more than one occasion simply followed a separate road. In refusing to place a mission on Formosa, sharply and openly rapping the Nationalists when she thought it necessary, continuing her non-strategic trade with China, pursuing a lenient passport philosophy and in other ways Australia differentiated herself from America. The differentiation, however, was not for its own sake, just as Australia's broad coincidence of policy with America was not simply a wish to conform, but mostly independent judgment whose conclusions were shared by many other Western Governments.

There were, to be sure, political considerations which conditioned public statements and perhaps to a degree official behavior. But, despite Australia's historic lethargy about sophisticated thinking on foreign affairs, the press did not hesitate to weigh, debate and criticize the Government's China policy, though perhaps there was a superabundance of apoplexy on the right fringes. Unfortunately, for a large portion of the Korean period, constructive criticism was not available from the Opposition benches, or at least from the A. L. P. leadership. The manner in which Korea pushed Communist China into bold international relief frightened and rallied the Catholic right, and also persuaded the A. L. P. that its political future would be uncertain unless it fell into the embrace of men who, among other things, would both carry and use a big stick against China. In this, rather special way, the shape of Australian political life, and with it the debate on China policy, became stultified by the events in Korea.

Data Papers

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aggression and economic sanctions resolutions or non-forcible actions of the
 The Eisenhower administration orders were palpably not the result of a
 motions of a deaf and dumb Government, waiting for instruction from
 Washington. Australia did work to moderate and restrain American
 behavior, and on more than one occasion simply followed a separate
 road. In refusing to place a mission on Formosa, sharply and openly
 rapping the Nationalists when she thought it necessary, continuing her
 non-strategic trade with China, pursuing a lenient passport philosophy
 and in other ways Australia differentiated herself from America. The
 differentiation, however, was not for its own sake, just as Australia's
 broad coincidence of policy with America was not simply a wish to
 conform, but mostly independent judgment whose conclusions were
 shared by many other Western Governments, for neutrality and
 (and) about which, also to mention was an
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 need had it. How could the better, constant for, solemnly
 forward, and the achievement was magnificent. It did, as we noted
 The Australian's aim to have a more complete agreement by
 success and that a hard very good the way ANZUS to
 in suitable attitude if that policy, and the Chinese to
 to respect to the U. N., or with respect to
 recognition, were in any way to be set to delay this goal, it is still a
 first priority goal which was involved.

Nonetheless, actions such as ultimate endorsement of the

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