CHAPTER 2

FOREIGN POLICIES

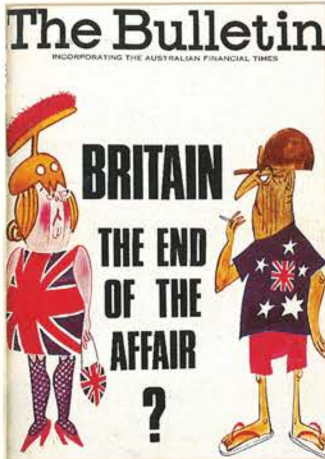
P.G. EDWARDS

THE PERIOD since 1939 has been one of immense change in the making of Australian foreign policy. Fifty years ago the Australian government did not even see itself as acting independently of Britain and the British Empire. Unlike Canada and South Africa, it had no independent diplomatic legations in non-British countries. The first such missions were established by the governments led by R.G. Menzies between 1939 and 1941, and Australia's diplomatic machinery was greatly expanded by Labor governments between 1941 and 1949. From the end of World War II there was no doubt that Australia would continue to develop its own foreign office and diplomatic service, but during the 1950s and early 1960s policy was largely decided by a small group of cabinet ministers and senior public servants. Parliamentary debates and public discussions on foreign affairs were rare and generally ill-informed.

Queen Elizabeth unveils in 1954 the column erected in Canberra by the Australian–American Association 'in grateful remembrance of the vital help given by the United States of America during the war in the Pacific, 1941–1945'. The Queen's British advisers were uneasy about the ceremony, disliking the prominence it gave to the American connection. Australian women's weekly, *10 Mar 1954.*

In 1965 the government committed Australian forces, including conscripts, to the conflict in Vietnam. The commitment provoked bitter controversy in the Australian community, culminating in huge street marches in 1970. From that time on, the days of widespread public apathy on foreign policy were over. Those who have the responsibility for Australia's external relations in the 1980s have to contend not only with the complexities of the international scene but also with the pressures generated by individual Australians and organised groups. Parliamentarians are more likely to take a close interest in foreign affairs, either individually or through parliamentary or party committees; numerous pressure groups take stands on particular issues; the printed and electronic media report and sometimes instigate debates on international affairs; commercial and financial institutions, trade unions, state governments and virtually all departments of the federal government strive to protect and promote their respective interests in international as well as domestic politics; while academics, journalists and other commentators expound their views through a variety of channels. In January 1939 it was still being argued officially that Australia's role in world affairs was largely restricted to confidential advice from the prime minister to the British government: by the 1980s Australia was an active and experienced participant in the international arena.

Three main strands may be detected in Australia's foreign policy during this period. The first is the relationship with Britain. In 1939 this was all-embracing; less than half a century later it had become a minor factor in Australian foreign policy. Foreign policy is not only a matter of protecting national security and economic interests; it is also an assertion of national identity. In the 1920s and 1930s many Australians, especially those in positions of power, defined the country as a British nation in the Antipodes, declaring Australia '98 per cent British'. By the 1980s only a few symbols, such as the Union Jacks fluttering over Government House in each state capital, were left as reminders of the imperial connection. The Commonwealth of Nations, which had evolved out of the British Empire, remained important in Australian policy mainly as a forum in which Australian prime ministers could develop their interests in Asian, African and Pacific affairs. Britain itself was of interest more as a member of the European Economic Community than as the former imperial power.



The Bulletin, *once republican, long staunchly imperial, now expresses widespread doubts about the British connection.* Bulletin, *8 April 1967.*

The second strand is the relationship with the USA. Some have implied that the history of recent Australian foreign policy is simply a transfer of our imperial allegiance from London to Washington. The ANZUS (Australia–New Zealand–United States) alliance of 1951 and all that followed from it have been seen as the inevitable consequences of Curtin's celebrated statement in December 1941 that 'Australia looks to America'. In fact Australian–American relations have undergone more vicissitudes than this interpretation would suggest and the relationship with the USA has never fully matched the former relationship with Britain. It can be argued that a sort of 'American empire' came into existence in the late 1940s and early 1950s, created at least partly as countries around the world sought American protection to bolster their own security. The Australian–American alliance may well be seen in this light, but few Australians ever developed the emotional attachment to America that their parents and grandparents had to Britain. At the height of the Vietnam War defenders of government policy sometimes accused their critics of being 'anti-American', as if that were in itself treacherous, but this charge never carried the odium that was attached to the label 'anti-British' during the 1914–18 war or even the 1939–45 war.

The third theme in Australian foreign policy since 1939 is more difficult to define. There was an increasing feeling that Australia should pay more attention to Asia, and less to historical associations with Britain and the USA. With this there often went a nationalistic emotion opposing the tendency of some Australian political leaders to identify Australian interests with those of either Britain or the USA. When Menzies said that he was 'British to the bootheels' or Harold Holt declared to President Lyndon B. Johnson that Australia would go 'all the way with LBJ', a generation reaching political maturity in the 1950s and 1960s reacted by asserting that Australia's future lay in its relations with the Asia-Pacific region, with more emphasis on Asia than on the Pacific. This strand of Australian policy had many manifestations. One was the idea that Australia should develop relations with Asian countries, especially Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and India, which did not simply reflect British or American policies in the region. Another was the emphasis Dr Evatt placed on the United Nations Organisation and the important role small and middle powers might have within it. A third was expressed in occasional hints that Australia had a quasi-imperial destiny in the islands to the north and east of the continent.

Each theme achieved, at various times, a dominant place in Australian policy and each was supported and challenged by arguments ranging from hard-headed calculations of geostrategic power to simple but deeply felt emotions.

The governments led by Robert Menzies from 1939 to 1941 have been generally regarded as almost uncritically pro-British in their foreign policy. Menzies had fought long and hard for the principle of diplomatic unity for the British Empire, against trends in Canada, South Africa and Ireland towards separate dominion policies. His public statements around the time of the declaration of war emphasised Australian loyalty to 'the mother country of all British countries', culminating in the announcement, once Great Britain had declared war on Germany, that 'as a result, Australia is also at war'. In 1941 Menzies paid an extended visit to Britain, hoping that an Imperial War Cabinet would be established in London, with himself as a member.

The early deployment of the Australian services matched these rhetorical commitments. All three fought in close co-operation with their British counterparts, following strategies worked out in London and often under the command of British officers. At one point early in 1940 the chiefs of staff of all three Australian services were British officers on secondment. The Royal Australian Navy and the Royal Australian Air Force were closely associated with the Admiralty and the Air Ministry in London, while the despatch to Europe and the Middle East of the first Australian army divisions seemed to emphasise the imperial more than the Australian traditions of the Australian Imperial Force.

Yet this was not the whole story. In secret cables to London the Australian government often vehemently criticised British conduct of the Empire's war effort. While Neville Chamberlain was prime minister, Menzies condemned what he saw as the lack of vigour, energy and imagination in fighting the war in its diplomatic and propaganda aspects as well as on the battlefield. After Churchill

Menzies addresses a press conference during his visit to London in 1941. One journalist wrote: 'the whole burden of his tale of Australia's determination to fight to the death if necessary was one of "family".'
NATIONAL LIBRARY

succeeded Chamberlain in May 1940, the theme of Menzies' criticisms changed to concern that Churchill's abundant energy and imagination would be misdirected into fruitless schemes and that the Far East occupied too low a priority in Churchill's global strategy. None of these criticisms was ever allowed to become public, although the exchanges were at times heated. In public Menzies always defended the British Empire as the appropriate framework for Australian involvement in the world, but behind his devotion to an idealised conception of the Empire was a strong commitment to defend and promote Australian interests within the imperial framework. His efforts were matched by those of S.M. Bruce, the former prime minister, now high commissioner in London, who created for himself a position of remarkable independence and considerable influence on Australian and, at times, British policies.

In October 1941 the Labor party, led by John Curtin, came into office, and in December faced the aggression from the north that Australians had feared for decades. When Japan entered the war Curtin quickly discovered that Australian defence policy for the past generation had been built on sand. The 'Singapore strategy' assumed that the Singapore naval base would be held until reinforcements could be sent from Europe. Although Churchill did send a battleship and a battlecruiser to Singapore they were rapidly sunk; in February 1942 Singapore fell and 15 000 Australian troops became prisoners-of-war. While this crisis was unfolding, with Australia apparently facing the possibility of Japanese invasion, Curtin issued a press statement in December 1941 which included the words: 'Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom'. This undoubtedly reflected the mood of the government at that time, a combination of shock that British power had proved so feeble and of hope that the USA would save Australia. In March 1942 General Douglas MacArthur arrived in Melbourne to become commander-in-chief of the southwest Pacific area. He received a rapturous welcome, and Curtin gave him almost unrestrained control over Australia's military resources.

The Australian–American Association represents 40 years of friendship, 1941–1981.
AUSTRALIAN INFORMATION SERVICE

But Curtin's famous appeal, never intended to attract the publicity that it received, did not mark an irrevocable change in Australian allegiance. Later in the war Curtin gave clear indications that he was turning back towards a closer association with Britain in his defence and foreign policies. At the 1944 Prime Ministers' Conference in London he tried in vain to establish institutions that would help to co-ordinate the foreign policies of the member nations of the Empire-Commonwealth. In this he was following precedents set by Australian prime ministers back to Alfred Deakin in 1907. He supported Britain rather than the USA in the Anglo-American debate over the future of Britain's colonial territories, and while his nomination of the Duke of Gloucester as governor-general seemed remarkable, given the Labor party's preference for Australians at Yarralumla, it was also part of his effort to maintain a British military presence in the Far East.

At the same time Curtin's highly energetic and assertive minister for external affairs, Dr H.V. Evatt, was attempting to develop a more distinctively Australian policy, less closely associated with either Britain or the USA. He challenged both powers on several issues, most notably on what he regarded as the failure of British and American leaders to consult Australia adequately on the conduct of the war. These stands, coupled with Evatt's abrupt and aggressive diplomatic style, often aroused anger in London and Washington. Evatt and his supporters believed that only by making themselves unpopular would they ensure that Australia's voice was heard. His critics wondered whether he had a clear view of Australia's interests or merely an egotistical desire to gain prominence for Australia—and for Evatt

Left.
Australian soldiers, airmen and sailors in the rest room of Australia House, having a light luncheon with the High Commissioner for Australia, the Honourable S.M. Bruce and Mrs Bruce, 1941.
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Above.
S.M. Bruce inspects the headquarters of the Forestry Commission, 1940.
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Prime Minister John Curtin greets General Douglas MacArthur, to whom he gives almost complete control over Australia's military resources.
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

personally—on the world stage. Some of his policy statements during the war hinted at the desire to see greater Australian influence in, perhaps even dominance of, the islands to the north and east. In 1944, on Evatt's initiative, Australia signed what some regarded as its first international treaty, the Anzac or Canberra Pact, with New Zealand. This hastily drafted agreement attempted to establish a sort of Australian-New Zealand protectorate over the islands of the South Pacific, an act that revealed suspicion about American motives in the region and which angered the US secretary of state, Cordell Hull.

Thus by the later stages of the war two distinct emphases appeared in Australian foreign policy. One was usually enunciated by Curtin, with the support of the secretary of the Defence Department, F.G. (later Sir Frederick) Shedden, and traditional conservative opinion. While defending Australian national interests, Curtin sought to maintain good relations with both Britain and the USA, Australia playing the role of a loyal junior partner to both powers. The other, bolder, emphasis, favoured by Evatt and supported by the Department of External Affairs and more radical strands of public opinion, involved willingness, sometimes eagerness, to confront the great powers. At first Curtin and Evatt worked closely together, but personal and political rivalries exacerbated their differences in foreign policy. By 1945 they were in conflict on the policy to be followed at the San Francisco conference at which the United Nations (UN) Organisation was founded. By sending the deputy prime minister and minister for the army, F.M. Forde, to the conference with Evatt, Curtin tried to modify Evatt's control over Australian policy. But Forde and his group of public servants proved no match for the Evatt team: at this important conference Evatt dominated Australian policy.

LOOKING FOR TROUBLE

Sydney Morning Herald, 24 Mar 1948.

After 1945 Evatt continued to try to develop an assertively nationalistic policy, but changes in international and domestic politics made this increasingly difficult. From San Francisco onwards he made the UN a central pillar of his policy and was rewarded in 1948 by being elected president of the General Assembly; but by now the cold war between the USA and the USSR had begun and was threatening to turn into World War III. In the same year the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia and Russia's blockade of Berlin led many in the West to see the UN as unable to guarantee peace and security. Even Evatt's cabinet colleagues began to question the faith he placed in the organisation. Evatt's regional ambitions also had to be curtailed because Australia lacked the military strength to support them. In November 1945, for example, he saw an opportunity to play an active diplomatic role in the Netherlands East Indies following the Japanese surrender, but the war cabinet insisted that Australian troops be withdrawn, rendering Evatt's plans impossible. In the subsequent struggle by Indonesian nationalists for independence from the Dutch, Evatt's policy was erratic and inconsistent. The gratitude later shown by Indonesian leaders for Australian support in this struggle was more properly awarded to J.B. Chifley, who had succeeded Curtin as prime minister, than to Evatt.

Critics accused Evatt of being a one-man band in foreign policy, but Chifley was more significant than most realised. He had no taste for imperial rhetoric or the formalities that accompanied prime ministers' conferences, but he strongly supported the efforts of the Attlee Labour government to resuscitate the British economy and its far-reaching schemes to nationalise British industries. As both prime minister and treasurer, Chifley was responsible for substantial grants from Australia to Britain 'in recognition of the struggle and sacrifices of the United Kingdom in World War II', while he placed obstacles in the way of American business interests seeking to increase their investments in Australia. Chifley also sympathised with the emerging nationalist movements in much of southeast Asia,

Dr H.V. Evatt, J.B. Chifley and British Labour prime minister Clement Attlee at 10 Downing Street, April 1946. The Australians were in London for a conference of dominion prime ministers.
NATIONAL LIBRARY

and believed that Asian communism should be countered by supporting legitimate national aspirations and by economic advancement, not by military means.

Under the Chifley government Australian defence policy returned to a primarily British—or more accurately British Commonwealth—orientation. The USA reassessed its strategic priorities in the postwar world, placing more emphasis on Europe and less on southeast Asia and the southwest Pacific. This made it impossible for the Australian government to persuade the Americans to retain the wartime base on Manus in the Admiralty Islands of New Guinea, a failure for which Evatt received enormous criticism, much of it unfair. The minister for defence, John Dedman, seemed more personally interested in his other portfolio, postwar reconstruction, leaving much to Shedden, secretary of the Department of Defence, who was probably responsible to a large degree for the various intra-Commonwealth defence agreements negotiated during this period. Evatt's vision of the Commonwealth was that Australia should be its leading member in the Asian–Pacific region, just as Britain was in Europe. This had some tangible results immediately after the war, when an Australian general commanded the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan and an Australian diplomat represented four Commonwealth countries (Australia, Britain, New Zealand and India) on the Allied Council for Japan. But little was heard of the idea in later years.

Following the successes gained by Allied intelligence during World War II, the late 1940s saw the creation of intelligence-sharing arrangements between the USA, Britain, Canada and Australia. The security of the information gained through these channels was treated seriously, and the creation of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) in 1948 was part of the price Australia had to pay for inclusion in the intelligence network. Before ASIO was established Australia was denied access to some information, apparently because of doubts relating to some scientists within the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and the defence group of departments and some officers of the Department of External Affairs. In the establishment of ASIO and other intelligence organisations, Australia generally followed British models, but in the

longer term the system came to be focused on the most powerful member of the network, the USA. This intelligence association has always been regarded as valuable by Australian defence authorities. Thus one of the most important defence links between Australia and the USA was established, with little public attention, before the negotiation of the ANZUS treaty.

The general election of December 1949 replaced the Labor government by a coalition of the Liberal and Country parties, with Menzies as prime minister and P.C. (later Sir Percy) Spender as minister for external affairs. The coalition then remained in office for 23 years, and Menzies remained prime minister for sixteen. Spender held his portfolio for only sixteen months, but in that time he established many of the foundations of Australian foreign policy for the next generation. Much of the course was charted in a long statement to parliament on 9 March 1950. Spender concentrated on the Pacific and southeast Asia, pondering the recent victory by the communists in China. Unlike Chifley who had emphasised the local roots of Asian communism, Spender saw it as closely linked to developments in Europe, where Stalin's Soviet Union had extended its power over half the continent. Like many leaders in London and Washington, Spender placed regional conflicts in the global context of Soviet foreign policy, the 'ultimate objective' of which was 'world communism ... with Moscow as the controlling centre'. He foreshadowed the possibility of communism spreading successively to Vietnam, Thailand, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia and the Philippines. In Spender's eyes, to combat this threat required long-term aid, which would promote rehabilitation and development in southeast Asia, and also a Pacific security pact backed by the USA. He saw the foundations of Australian policy to be its links with the British Commonwealth, the USA and the UN, in that order.

The Labor government, like others before it, had hoped to secure some form of American guarantee for Australian security. Negotiations towards a treaty of

A poster displayed during the Korean War seeks both to revive the spirit of World War II and to show that the armed forces wanted to recruit women.
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

friendship, commerce and navigation were frustrated by Chifley's attitude towards American investment and Evatt's inconsistent policy directions. The negotiations were revived under Spender, who hoped for a more far-reaching security pact. Menzies was sceptical, but Spender's opportunity came with the unexpected outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950. Australia immediately sent limited naval and air forces and in July, on Spender's initiative, announced the despatch of ground troops, just ahead of a similar British commitment. American authorities were grateful for this support; they reassessed the importance of east and southeast Asia in the wake of events in China and Korea; and they sought Australian diplomatic support for the negotiation of a lenient peace treaty with Japan. Spender saw the chance and pressed his case forcefully. With the aid of a like-minded New Zealand government, an Australian–New Zealand–USA security treaty (ANZUS) was negotiated in February 1951 and signed on 1 September 1951.

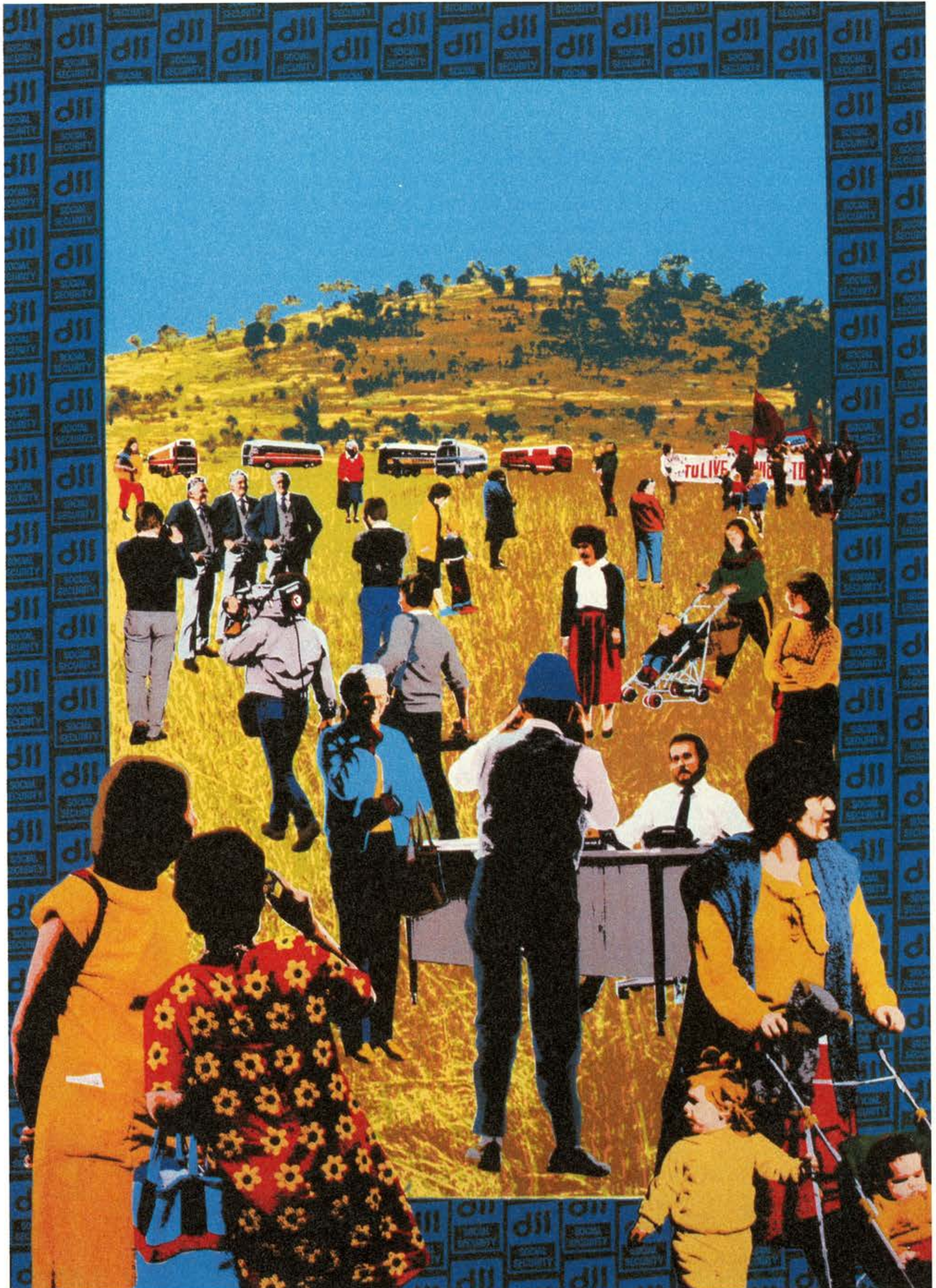
At this time there was widespread fear in Australia and elsewhere about an imminent outbreak of global war between the communist and non-communist blocs. In 1950 Menzies introduced a defence program designed to prepare Australia for such a war within three years. He had won the election on a program of opposition to communism, both at home and abroad, and unequivocally aligned Australia with the USA in the global struggle. This alliance was cemented by Australia's need for development capital, which only the USA could provide. By taxation and other agreements, Menzies encouraged the growth of American investment, and as the fear of war receded the government placed less emphasis on defence expenditure and more on economic development. As the 1950s progressed, both government and private business looked increasingly to the USA as a source of capital, instead of relying on the London money market.

As minister for external affairs 1951–60 R.G. Casey sought to consolidate policies and friendships established by his precedessors. At a Colombo Plan students' ball in Melbourne he talks with Lalita Rajasoorie from Kuala Lumpur.
NATIONAL LIBRARY

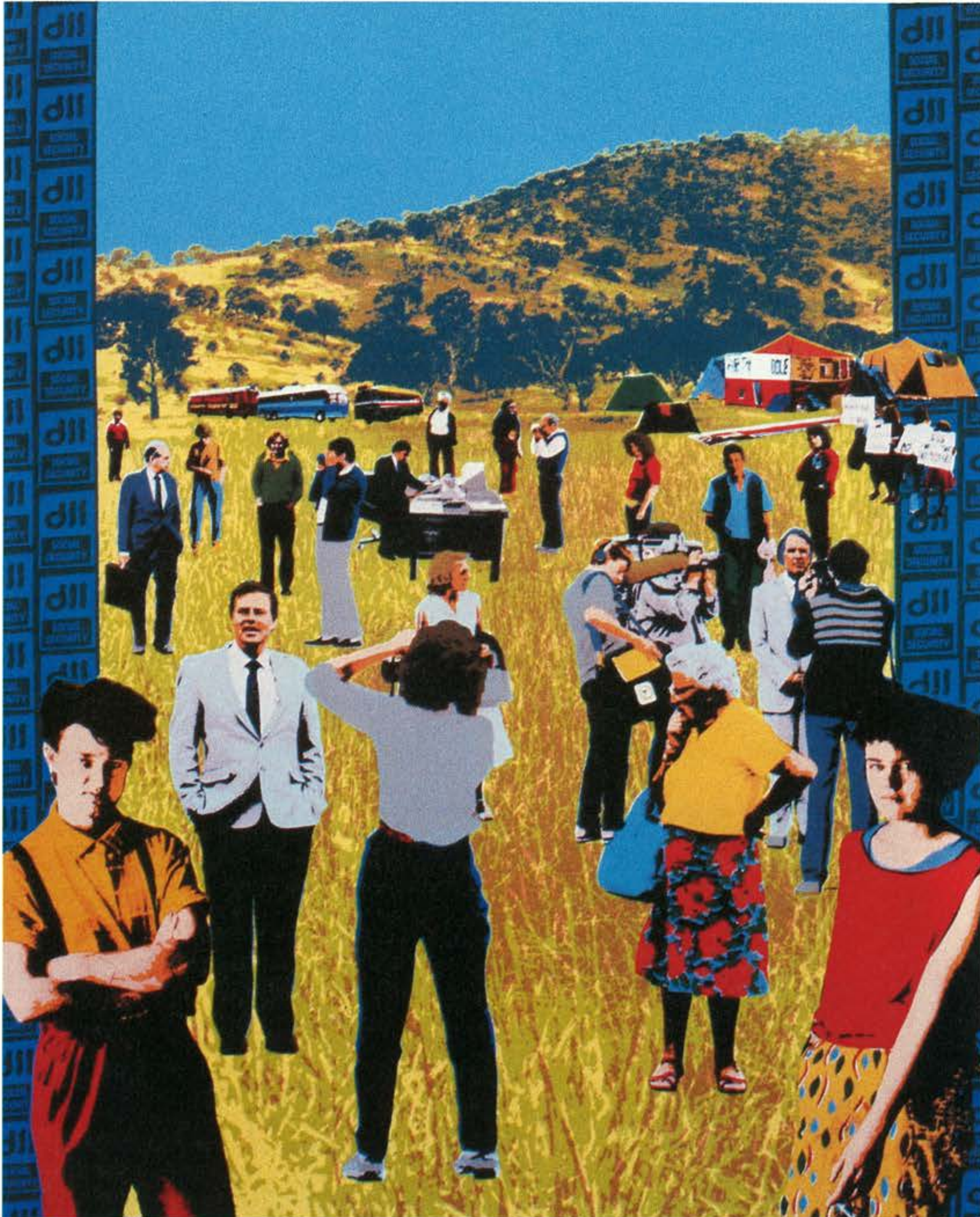
During the Korean War Australian forces were also engaged in another fight against communism, this time alongside British Commonwealth but not American allies. When a state of emergency was declared by the British colonial authorities in Malaya in 1948, Chifley had declined to send armed forces, confining his support to the supply of arms and material. Menzies was more forthcoming, providing RAAF bombers and transport aircraft in 1950. When this commitment was made Australian defence authorities were still undecided whether, in the event of a global war, Australian forces should be sent to the Middle East (as the British government preferred) or to Malaya: by the mid-1950s this issue was resolved in favour of Malaya.

In addition to the armed struggle against communism, Spender also pioneered another aspect of Australian involvement in Asia. From the conference of Commonwealth foreign ministers in Colombo in January 1950 came what was known as the Colombo Plan, a program of technical aid for Asian countries. Spender's motives in committing Australia to this plan were a mixture of altruism and national self-interest. Asian poverty cried out for alleviation, while long-term aid would help maintain stable non-communist regimes in the region and perhaps eventually create markets for Australia's newly developing manufacturing industries. Under the plan Asian students attended Australian universities, schools and technical institutions, bringing many thousands of young Asians and Australians into personal contact.

If Spender was a notable innovator in Australian foreign policy, his successor as minister for external affairs from 1951 to 1960, R.G. (later Lord) Casey, was a consolidator. From his experience—rare in an Australian of his generation—of moving in high political circles in London and Washington, Casey concluded that Australia should try to remain close to both Britain and the USA. Far from wishing to play one ally off against the other, Casey strove to improve Anglo–American



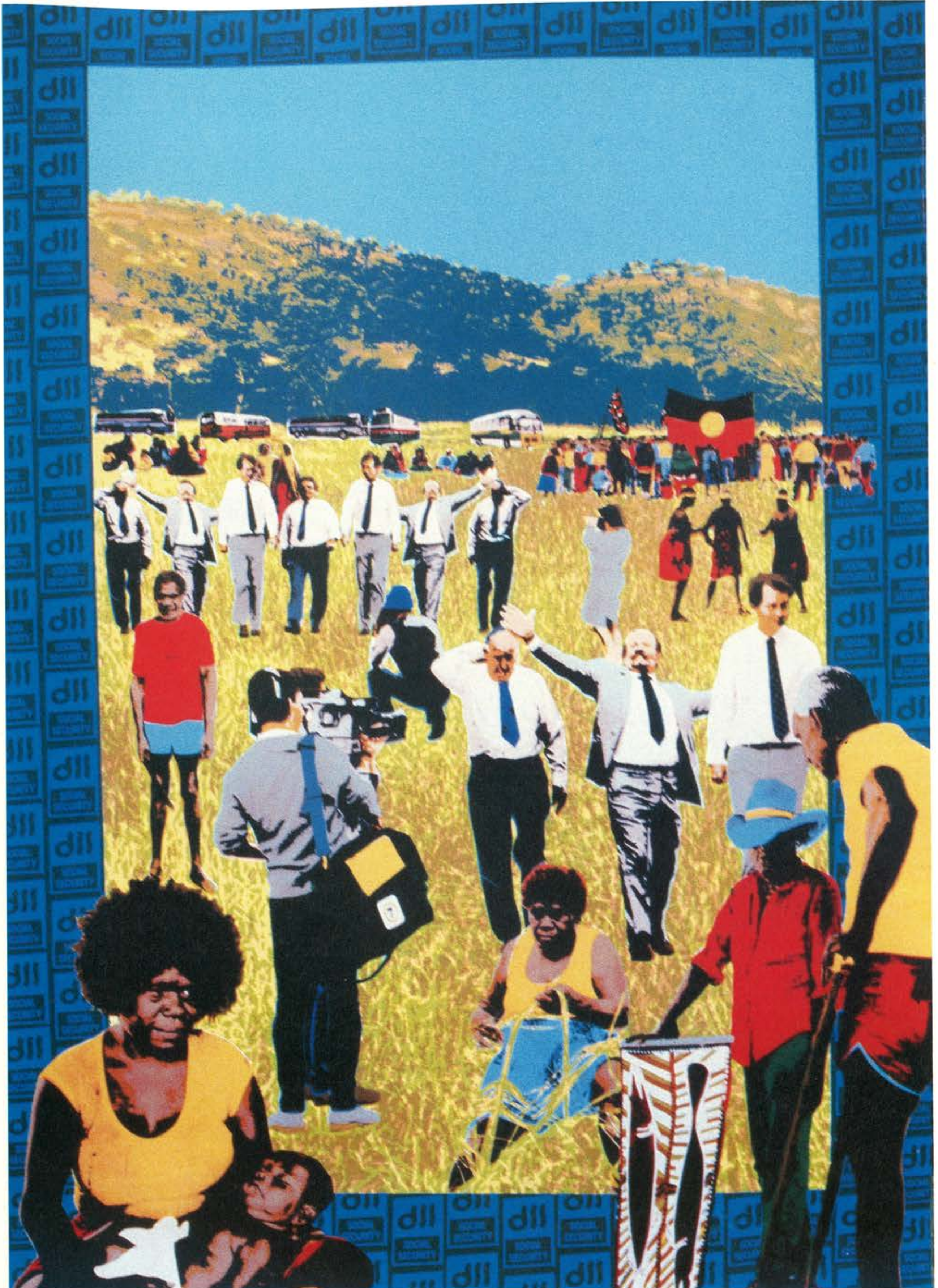
Economic Landscape I: 'The marginalisation of women.'



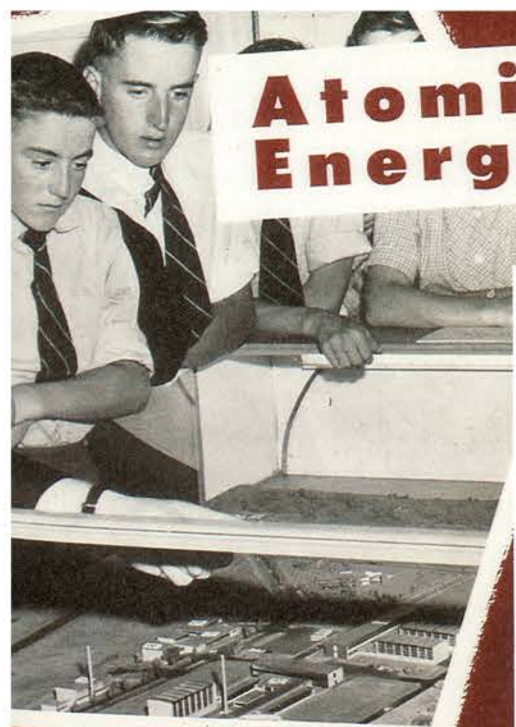
Economic Landscape II: 'The marginalisation of the unemployed.'

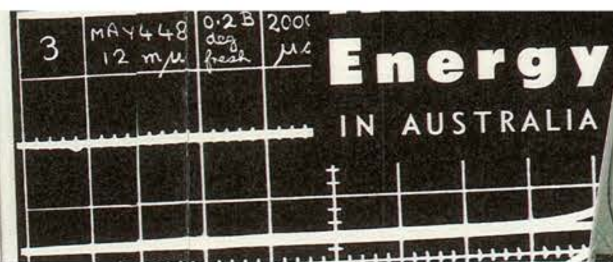
At the margins

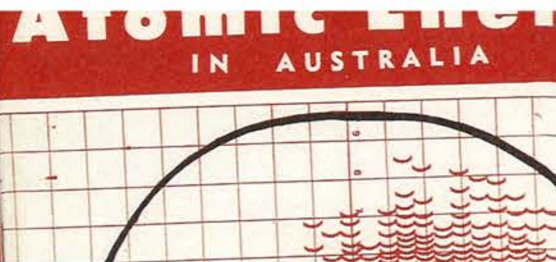
In these three posters, published in 1985, Toni Robertson places the themes of marginalisation and protest in an unmistakably Australian landscape. The titles are the artist's, and in a comment on the study as a whole she writes: 'These prints are concerned with the exclusion of three groups of Australians from the mainstream of economic power. Their marginalisation means that they remain hidden, their voices unheard, ignored by the media, governments and history. Economic powerlessness frequently leads individuals within these groups to continued dependence on social security. This enables them to physically survive. But only by organising around the realities of their own lives are they empowered to act.'

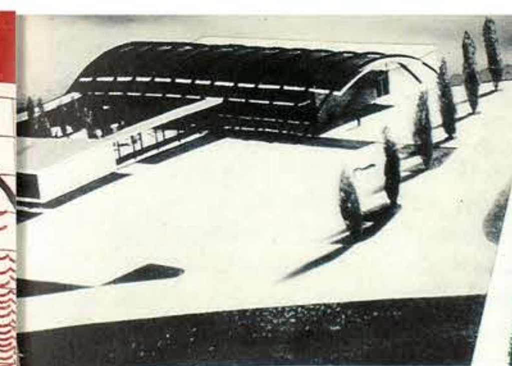


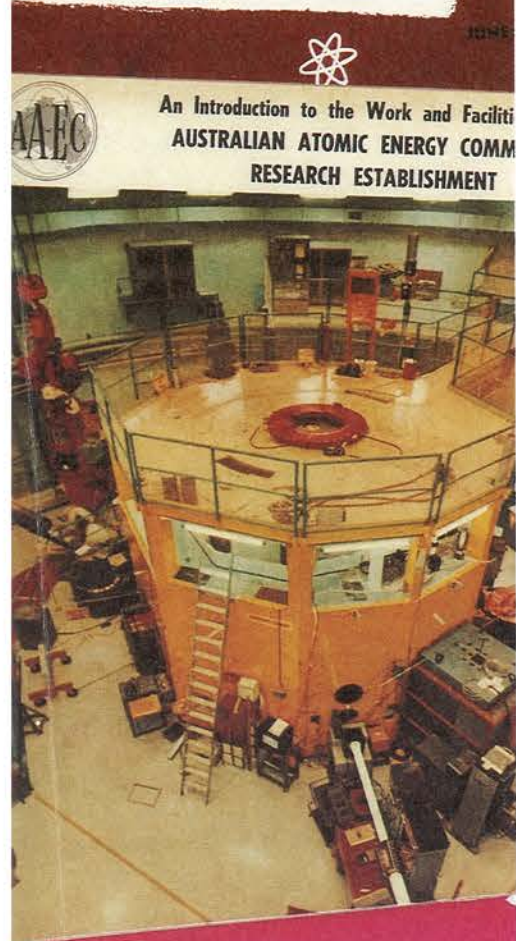
Economic Landscape III: 'The marginalisation of the Aboriginal people.'











Weaver Hawkins, Atomic power, 1947. Oil on hardboard.
ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

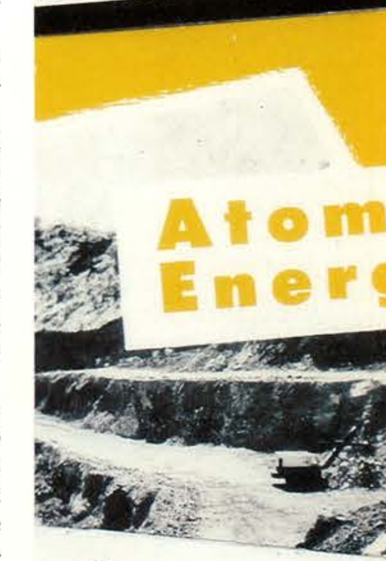
Australia and The Nuclear Age

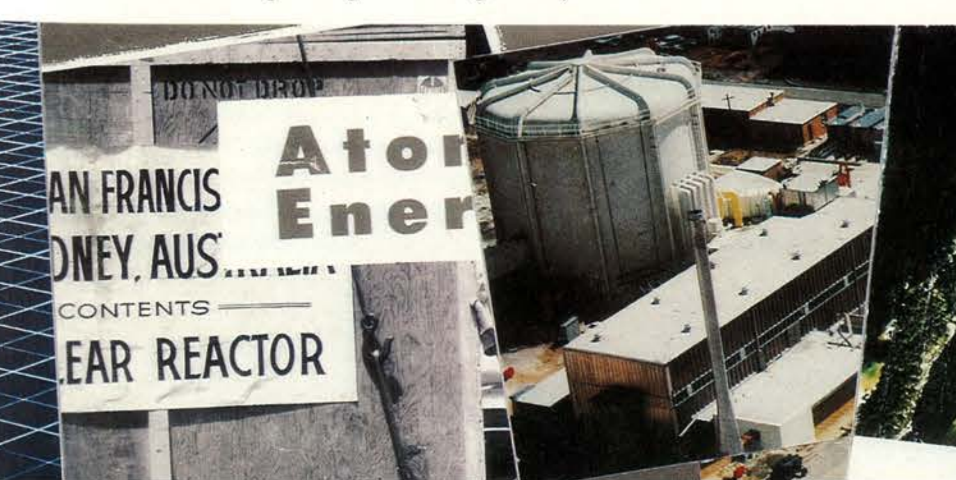
Imagining what the world might be like after World War II, some Australians saw hope in a new energy source based on the splitting of the atom. The rhetoric of optimism 'rivalled the book of Isaiah', A. D. McKnight, executive commissioner of the Australian Atomic Energy Commission, recalled later. 'Australia's dead heart will beat vigorously', people predicted. 'Sheep and cattle will graze there in lush pastures . . . the Arunta tribe will need a different range of colours in their palettes, replacing burnt amber with emerald green . . . inland rivers will flow as they did in the days when the giant wombat roamed the land . . . Tibooburra will become a metropolis . . .'

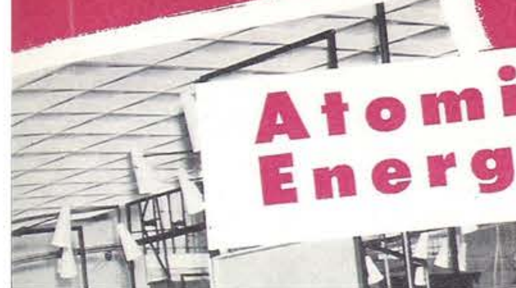
Such optimism survived despite the fact that the war closed with an ominous demonstration of the unprecedented destructiveness of nuclear weapons. But Australian governments were to have little use for what came to be called the 'peaceful atom'. Economists reasoned that it was much cheaper to generate electricity from coal and from water-driven turbines than from a nuclear reactor. Anxious nonetheless to keep up interest in the new technology, the Menzies government in 1953 established the Australian Atomic Energy Commission (AAEC), whose charter included mining uranium (discovered at Rum Jungle in 1949), training scientists and conducting research. In opening the AAEC's first tiny reactor in 1958, Prime Minister Menzies reflected that 'there are so many people who always know you're wrong even when you're not too sure you're right yourself'. But, he affirmed 'There are no arguments about this, this is a great beginning.'

However, a change in government policy left uranium mining to private investors, and apart from manufacturing isotopes for medical use the AAEC has been able to do little to develop 'practical uses of atomic energy for industrial and other purposes', as its charter bids. In the late 1960s Menzies' successors encouraged AAEC plans to build a nuclear power station at Jervis Bay. 'The time for this nation to enter the atomic age has now arrived', announced Prime Minister Gorton in October 1969. But governments since have had little enthusiasm for the project.

If there had been a 'beginning' to Australia's participation in the atomic age it was Menzies' 1951 agreement to host British research into atomic weapons. From 1952 to 1956 the government allowed British scientists to explode twelve bombs – three off the Western Australian coast , and nine in the South Australian desert near Maralinga. Ministers assured Australians of the trials' safety and even invited the nation to feel proud. In 1986 a Royal Commission set up to investigate the test program concluded that safety standards for test-site employees and for local Aborigines had been inadequate, and that plutonium fragments now poisoned a large area of the 'dead heart' that some had hoped might 'beat vigorously'.







The old connection and the new: Queen Elizabeth II shares a stamp with Canberra's Australian–American War Memorial, 1955.
AUSTRALIA POST

R.G. Casey cultivated good relations with Asian leaders. Here he greets Dr Subardjo, Indonesian minister for foreign affairs, on a goodwill visit to Australia in 1951.
AUSTRALIAN INFORMATION SERVICE

relations, using his gift for personal diplomacy and his extensive network of highly placed friends. Menzies still seemed more emotionally committed to Britain despite the clear signs of British weakness and American strength. Indeed it was partly his fear that Britain might be left behind in the development of nuclear weapons, rendering the western powers too dependent on the USA alone, that induced the Menzies government to let Britain conduct atomic weapons tests on Australian soil in the 1950s. These tests were held principally at Maralinga in South Australia and the Monte Bello Islands off the Western Australian coast.

The test of Australian loyalty came when the Suez crisis erupted in 1956. When President Nasser of Egypt proclaimed the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company, Menzies gave wholehearted support to British prime minister Anthony Eden's opposition, never doubting that Eden had American support. Then when the crisis continued and the British and French invaded Egypt, Casey warned against associating Australia too closely with Britain, realising that the invasion would alienate the American government as well as those of the post-colonial countries in Asia and Africa. But cabinet supported Menzies. When Eden's and Menzies' policies had precisely the effects that Casey had predicted, Casey had once more to face the task of trying to repair Anglo–American relations.

This spectacular episode should not be allowed to obscure the other principal feature of Casey's foreign policy: his careful encouragement of relations with the countries of east, southeast and south Asia. He brought many Asian leaders into his network of personal contacts and promoted the growth of Australian diplomatic representation in the region. The southward thrust of communism was still seen as the principal threat to Australian security. At the Geneva Conference of 1954 which discussed the future of Indo-China immediately after the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, Casey supported the non-interventionist policy of the British against those sections of the American administration favouring military intervention in Vietnam, possibly with nuclear weapons. At this conference Vietnam was divided into two zones, the communist North and the non-communist South. Casey later expressed private doubts about the future of South Vietnam under President Ngo Dinh Diem.

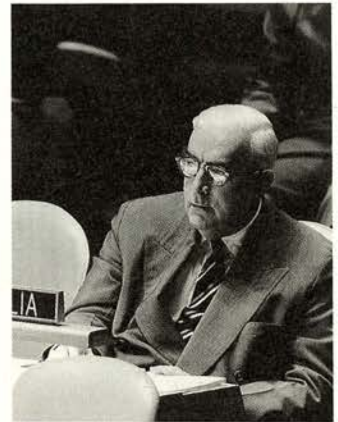
Immediately after the Geneva Conference Australia joined the USA, Britain, France, New Zealand, Thailand, Pakistan and the Philippines in the South-East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO), designed to protect the Asian states that were members together with South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. In 1955 Australia withdrew its last battalion from Korea and sent it, with naval and air units, to join British and New Zealand forces to form the British Commonwealth Far Eastern Strategic Reserve in the Malaya–Singapore region. This was the first introduction of Australian combat troops into Malaya. Thus in the mid-1950s Australia's commitment to stand alongside both Britain and America in the defence of non-communist states in southeast Asia was given greater diplomatic and military definition.

Casey's time as minister also saw significant development of the Department of External Affairs, both in Canberra and in diplomatic missions abroad. Under Evatt the department had grown rapidly but had become faction-ridden and the object of suspicion on security grounds. During the 1950s and 1960s it became more professional and systematic in its operations, and its working relationship with the Department of Defence was greatly improved. Most of its leading diplomats were men whose views had been formed, or greatly influenced, by the developments of the 1930s and 1940s. They had witnessed demonstrable British weakness in the Munich crisis and the fall of Singapore, the emergence of a Soviet threat after 1945 and the importance of American power in defeating the totalitarian right and

resisting the totalitarian left. The central themes in Australian diplomacy became the American alliance and relations with southeast Asia.

Australian policy on national security matters was largely decided by a small group of cabinet ministers and senior public servants in the External Affairs, Prime Minister's and Defence departments, but this did not constitute the full range of foreign policy. John (later Sir John) McEwen, the leader of the Country party and deputy prime minister from 1958 to 1971, was a powerful figure in the coalition government, effectively dominating policy on trade, tariffs and primary industry. This control was aided by his use of the Trade Commissioner Service (established in the 1930s) as virtually an alternative diplomatic service, independent of the ambassadors who reported to External Affairs. A dichotomy emerged between the security and international trade aspects of Australian foreign policy. Perhaps the most significant development in trade policy was the Australian–Japanese trade agreement of 1957, which made it possible for Australia's hated enemy of the 1940s to become a major trading partner from the 1960s. McEwen and his team of public servants, led by J.G. (later Sir John) Crawford, negotiated this and other trade agreements with little concern for the views of External Affairs. In the 1960s, while the government was fighting communism in Vietnam and asserting that communist China was the greatest threat to world peace, McEwen was presiding over profitable wheat sales to China and developing new trade agreements with the Soviet bloc.

As his own minister for external affairs, Prime Minister Menzies represents Australia at the United Nations General Assembly in September 1960.
UNATIONS



In the defence and security elements of foreign policy, the decade from 1956 to 1965 has been seen as a period when Australia lost some of its flexibility and originality, becoming increasingly rigid in its outlook. In the early 1960s this was a matter of some concern, for new problems were appearing while the traditional solution of relying on what Menzies called 'great and powerful friends' in London and Washington was being called into question. This lack of flexibility was often attributed to Sir Robert Menzies (as he became in 1963), who took the portfolio of External Affairs for two years in 1960–61 and who dominated most aspects of foreign policy for the last ten years of his record-breaking term as prime minister.

The apparent dangers that Australia faced were many and disturbingly close. Indonesia's President Sukarno was becoming increasingly restive and aggressive in his rhetoric, while the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) gained strength. Frequent talk of a 'Peking–Djakarta axis' was disturbing to Australian ears. Australia had long resisted Indonesia's claims to the western half of New Guinea, which had remained under Dutch control after Indonesia's independence, but this position became untenable as Britain and the USA declined to support the Dutch, and in 1962 Sukarno incorporated the territory in a bloodless victory. The implication that the USA would not give unequivocal support to Australia against Indonesia in a regional conflict was a matter of profound concern, for Indonesia was also challenging the creation of the new state of Malaysia. In 1961 it was announced that Malaya, Singapore and two British territories on Borneo would from 1963 form the new federation of Malaysia. Australia, Britain and other Commonwealth countries supported Malaysia against the limited military measures taken by Sukarno in the name of 'confrontation', even though Australia and Indonesia did not break diplomatic relations.

On the 175th anniversary of the British landing at Sydney Cove, cartoonist Les Tanner has R.G. Menzies and his deputy John McEwen watch a contest for Australian territory between Kennedy's USA, Sukarno's Indonesia and Macmillan's Britain.
Bulletin, *26 Jan 1963.*

In Indo-China the combination of communism and nationalism was proving a powerful threat to the non-communist governments established, with French and American support, after the Geneva Conference. Differences among the SEATO powers made it impossible to secure collective action, but some member countries, including the USA and Australia, increased their military and economic assistance, especially to Laos (which appeared the most vulnerable), Vietnam and Thailand. In

President Diem of South Vietnam is cordially received by Prime Minister R.G. Menzies, 1957.
AUSTRALIAN INFORMATION SERVICE

1962 a squadron of RAAF fighters was established at Ubon in Thailand, and in the same year Australia began what was to become a ten-year military commitment in Vietnam with the despatch of 30 military advisers.

Behind all the actual or potential conflicts in the arc from Korea to India, Australian policy-makers generally regarded one power as the ultimate trouble-maker—the People's Republic of China (often referred to as 'Red China'). In support of this judgment they asserted that China had invaded Tibet in 1950 and suppressed a rebellion there in 1959; had intervened in the Korean War and brutally mistreated Australian prisoners of war; had gone to war with India over a border dispute in 1962; had often appeared to be on the brink of attempting to recapture the offshore islands held by the Chinese Nationalists driven from the mainland in 1949; it had become a nuclear power in 1964; and it had given strong rhetorical and more limited material support to the various communist insurgencies in southeast Asia. In the 1950s and 1960s this portrayal of China as the evil genius seemingly had widespread public support, which was strengthened and continued by accounts of excesses carried out in China itself during the 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' after 1966. Only in the 1970s did it come to be widely accepted that China had had a legitimate case in several of those international disputes; that it had not given as much support, let alone direction, to insurgencies in southeast Asia as Australians had tended to assume; and that even Chinese rhetoric had often been misinterpreted. By the early 1960s it was publicly obvious that there was a deep rift between the USSR and China, but this seemed only to underline the danger from China. Many Australians judged the Chinese, largely on the basis of their rhetoric, to be the more extreme communists, while they assumed that the Soviets were becoming more moderate. There were even brief flickers of hope from time to time that Moscow might help the west to restrain Peking. The tendency of the Liberal–Country party government to

Prime Minister R.G. Menzies, visiting Washington in 1962, talks with President John F. Kennedy at the White House.
NATIONAL LIBRARY

identify China as the source of evil in the region was reinforced by the Democratic Labor Party (DLP), a fiercely anti-communist party which had broken away from the Australian Labor Party (ALP) in the mid-1950s.

While political developments in southeast Asia and Indo-China looked ever more threatening, the reliability of Australia's traditional friends was becoming more suspect. In 1962 the British government made its first application to join the European Economic Community (the Common Market). This application was vetoed by President de Gaulle of France, but the implications were clear. Britain now saw its destiny in European terms, at the expense of its Commonwealth ties and its position in the Far East. McEwen was concerned at what that meant for Australian trade, while Menzies was no less worried by the political effects. The withdrawal of British forces from east of Suez was now increasingly probable. At the same time the USA was rethinking its priorities in the region. As the position of the non-communist regimes in Indo-China deteriorated, America grew increasingly troubled lest communist-inspired 'wars of national liberation' should pose a threat to its position in the world. President John F. Kennedy's assertion in his 1961 inaugural address that the USA would 'support any friend, oppose any foe' in the defence of liberty against communism came into conflict with an accepted maxim of American foreign policy since the Korean War—that America should never again get into a land war in Asia.

Thus the central thrust of Australian policy during the 1960s, especially while Paul Hasluck was minister for external affairs (1964–69), was an attempt to convince both these friendly powers that they should retain a substantial military presence in the region. The effort was more successful with the USA than with Britain. During the decade links between the Australian and American economies also became closer, while a series of defence and scientific agreements resulted in the establishment of installations on Australian soil. These were officially called

1960s.

'joint facilities'; but critics of this close alignment with the USA, doubting that Australia had any genuine control over their operations, generally referred to them as 'US bases'. The most important were the naval communications station at North West Cape (1963), the joint defence space research facility at Pine Gap (1966) and the joint defence space communications station at Nurrungar (1969). The government apparently regarded these installations as a contribution to the defence of the western world and a means of ensuring American support for Australia. Britain meanwhile continued to withdraw from east of Suez, especially under the Labour governments of 1964 to 1970, and in 1968 announced an acceleration of this policy which caused consternation in Australia.

The ALP, in opposition in Canberra throughout the 1950s and 1960s, was uneasy about much of the government's foreign policy but found it difficult to develop a coherent, consistent and electorally attractive alternative. Even after the ALP/DLP split in 1954–55 some members of the ALP were as strongly anti-communist as the government in foreign policy, but generally the ALP was torn between a concern that Australia was becoming too closely identified with American foreign policy, especially its nuclear strategy, and the apparent public support for the government's attitudes. The establishment of the communications station at North West Cape, through which the US navy could communicate with its nuclear submarines, provoked a long controversy within the ALP. The open rift between elements of the party organisation who opposed the installation, and some of its parliamentary leaders who saw such opposition as electorally disastrous, helped Menzies to win easily at the 1963 election.

In this context of a deteriorating international situation but strong domestic support, the government had to decide whether to commit combat troops to Vietnam in late 1964 and early 1965. President Johnson asked for 'more flags' to show that American policy in South Vietnam had the support of many democratic nations. The Australian government feared that, without such support, the Americans might withdraw from the region. In April 1965 Menzies announced the commitment of a battalion to Vietnam, and under Harold Holt, Menzies'

Below right.
Australian *colour supplement commemorating the newspaper's twentieth anniversary, 14–15 July 1984.*

Below.
'It's LBJ all the way.' Melbourne crowds greet President Lyndon B. Johnson, 21 October 1966. Police estimated that 750 000 people watched the motorcade go by. Australian *colour supplement, 14–15 July 1984.*

Bottom right.
Officials hand out American flags to eager spectators. Photograph by David Moore.

THE AUSTRALIAN

WE SAY — SEE PAGE

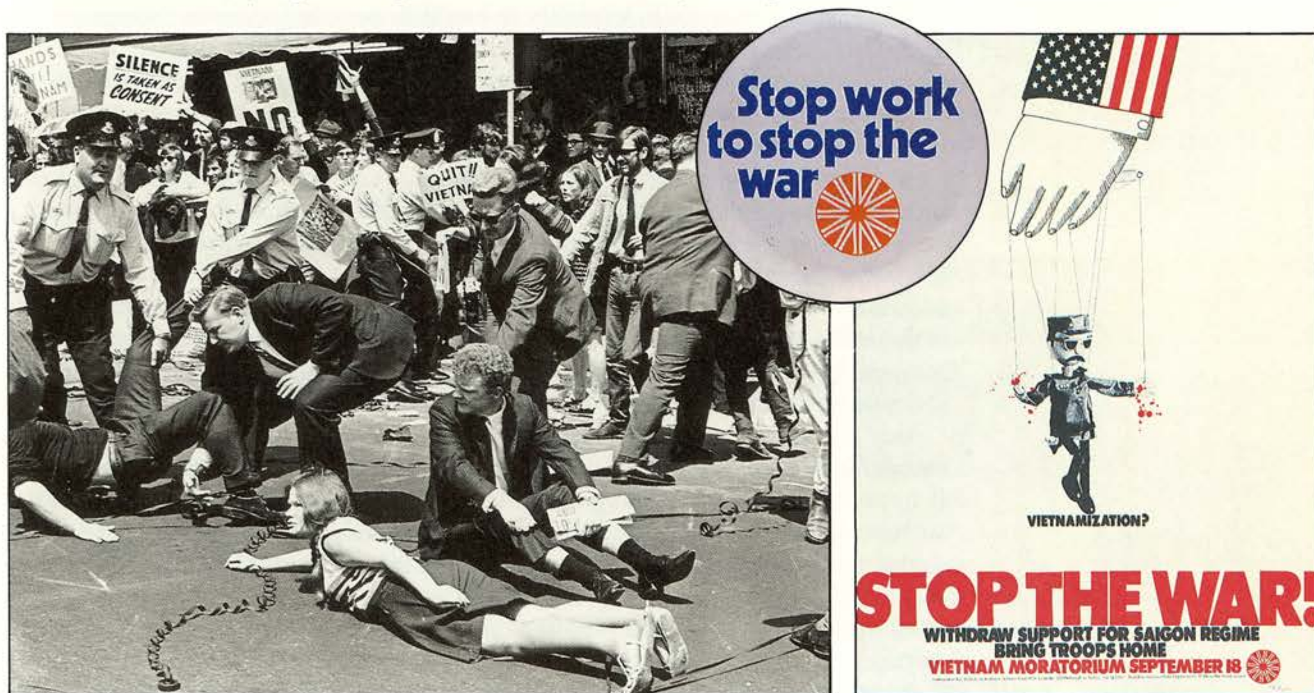
MENZIES SAYS IT – WE FIGHT IN VIETNAM

'They criss-crossed dense jungle and paddyfields by helicopter, constantly searching for the elusive Viet Cong. Sometimes they found them and managed to kill them. Sometimes they took prisoners. And sometimes they were shot at and killed. This was life for Australian soldiers in the late Sixties.'

successor, this force was quickly increased to a task force of three battalions with support groups. The ebullient Holt formed a close political and personal friendship with President Johnson, and echoed Johnson's campaign slogan in an effusive statement that Australia would go 'all the way with LBJ': but this obscured the fact that Australia never committed more than 8000 troops at any one time, which the USA regarded as useful but not equal to the importance of the cause. For the first time Australia was fighting in a major conflict without Britain as an ally.

The commitment to Vietnam followed the decision of November 1965 to introduce conscription on a birthday ballot scheme of 20-year-old males, including the obligation to overseas service. The government apparently believed that, at a time of full employment, it could not recruit a volunteer army sufficiently large to meet its current and foreseeable commitments, given the number of crises in the region. The introduction of conscription for overseas service had majority support, but it aroused deep and bitter opposition from sections of the population, evoking memories of the divisive struggles of 1916 and 1917. The combination of these two issues, Vietnam and conscription, became for several years the subject of Australia's most heated political debate. Although they became inextricably entwined with other issues, such as 'the generation gap', student power in the universities, the limits to civil disobedience and growth of a 'counter culture', it could be said that foreign policy now dominated Australian politics as never before. Instead of being largely confined to a few ministers and officials in Canberra, a major issue of foreign policy was now being argued in universities and schools, in factories and homes, in the press and on the medium of television. As the war dragged on with apparently little success and as increasing attention was given to the brutal and seemingly counter-productive tactics used by Australia's allies, public opinion gradually turned against the involvement. The use of street marches to demonstrate opposition to government policy culminated in the 'moratorium' marches of May and September 1970, the term being borrowed from the American protest movement.

While controversy raged, the government stood fast by its alignment with the



Below left.
Demonstrators in Liverpool Street, Sydney, lie in the path of President Johnson's car in protest against the Vietnam War, 22 October 1966. 'Run over the bastards,' said the premier of New South Wales, R.W. Askin, a passenger in the president's car (as reported in the Sydney Morning Herald, *24 July 1968).*
FAIRFAX PHOTO LIBRARY

Below centre.
Moratorium badge, 1970.
HORTON COLLECTION

Below.
A poster issued during the Vietnam moratorium campaign, 1970, showing the South Vietnamese vice-president, Marshal Ky, as a puppet of the United States.
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

USA, despite embarrassments when it was given inadequate warning of significant changes in American policy. The Labor party was consistently opposed to conscription for overseas service, but its policy on Vietnam became entangled in factional disputes and the rivalry between A.A. Calwell and E.G. Whitlam for the leadership. As late as February 1965 the parliamentary party gave strong support to American bombing of North Vietnam. Only after the Tet offensive of early 1968 did Labor develop a united policy of opposition to the war. (In the Tet offensive the communist forces shocked the American military command by instigating simultaneous attacks in many parts of South Vietnam, even penetrating the grounds of the American Embassy in Saigon. Although they were militarily defeated, the scale and intensity of the attacks seemed to belie US assurances that the war was being won, and therefore had a profound effect on American—and Australian—public opinion.) Changing attitudes to the Vietnam War contributed to the electoral fortunes of the major parties. In the 1966 general election Holt, campaigning principally on the Vietnam issue, won a huge victory; in 1969 his successor, John Gorton, was returned by a much narrower margin; and in 1972 the ALP, led by Whitlam, gained office for the first time in 23 years. The decision to bring home most Australian troops was taken in 1971, in line with American troop withdrawals, so Whitlam's immediate decisions to end conscription and withdraw the last troops were largely symbolic.

In 1971 Whitlam, as leader of the opposition, had visited China and met Premier Chou En-lai. The Liberal prime minister, William McMahon poured scorn on this venture, only to discover within days that in Washington the Nixon administration was secretly planning a reversal of its China policy. President Richard Nixon and his national security adviser, Dr Henry Kissinger, rejected the theory that China was their real enemy in Vietnam and set out to cultivate better Sino–American relations. This episode seemed to epitomise the feeling that the Labor party was now in tune with changes in the world balance-of-power and with American thinking, whereas the coalition parties under McMahon appeared out of touch.

The Whitlam government therefore came to office in an atmosphere of great optimism and confidence in its ability to establish new directions in foreign policy. For the first year Whitlam himself took the portfolio of Foreign Affairs (the name had been changed from External Affairs while McMahon was minister in 1970), and he dominated the making of foreign policy throughout his three years in office. The principal emphases of his policy were a desire to be more independent of the USA; a sharp reduction in the military, as distinct from the political and economic, aspects of Australia's involvement in the region; and greater sympathy for the UN and what was becoming known as 'the third world'. Much in this approach was reminiscent of Evatt, although Whitlam put it with less abrasiveness and more flair. He tried hard to establish a new regional organisation, less ideologically oriented than the now-moribund SEATO or the anti-communist Asian and Pacific Council supported by Hasluck, but these efforts came to nothing.

Several of the foreign policy developments for which the Whitlam government is likely to be remembered were actually initiated in the last years of the Liberal–Country party government, often reacting to pressure from the Whitlam-led opposition. A major example was the independence of Papua New Guinea. Australians were accustomed to thinking of themselves as having emerged from colonial status under British imperial rule, but they often forgot that they had to the north a colony of their own, partly under UN trusteeship. After slow constitutional progress in the 1950s and 1960s, Liberal policy speeded up while Andrew Peacock was minister for territories, and Papua New Guinea gained self-government in 1972. Whitlam was eager to follow on by granting full

Prime Minister Gough Whitlam's visit to China in 1973, which followed an earlier visit as leader of the opposition in 1971, triumphantly expressed a change in policy which unexpectedly proved to be in tune with that of the United States.
AUSTRALIAN INFORMATION SERVICE

This rooftop, clearly visible to aircraft flying in and out of Darwin, proclaims the opposition of local residents to plans to use Darwin airport as a base for US B52 bombers. Photograph by Carol Ruff.

independence as quickly as possible. This was achieved in 1975.

Most attention during the Whitlam government centred on relationships with the USA, which began with a spectacular dispute in the first month of the new government. Three newly elected ministers criticised President Nixon over the 'Christmas bombing' of North Vietnam in December 1972, using terms such as 'maniacs' and 'mass murderers'. The whole relationship now became a major issue; and in 1973, after a long series of political appointees, some of whom had proved embarrassingly unsuitable, a senior career diplomat, Marshall Green, became American ambassador in Canberra. The government welcomed his appointment as a sign that the USA was taking Australia more seriously, although one ALP senator accused Green of being a 'hatchet man' sent to protect American interests. Green found three principal areas of dissatisfaction in Australia: a general tendency by the American administration to take Australian support for granted, without adequate or timely consultation; a growing feeling that too many decisions affecting the Australian economy were being taken in American boardrooms; and a suspicion that the 'joint facilities' established in the 1960s were effectively under unilateral American control. The North West Cape agreement was renegotiated to give substantive and symbolic improvement to the Australian position, while retaining US control over its central functions. The government pronounced itself satisfied with this and similar agreements, and generally with the more mature and professional atmosphere in which Australian–American relations were conducted; but segments of ALP opinion remained unhappy with the extent of American influence on Australian defence and economic policies. The general public seemed to support the Whitlam government's policy of combining a more assertive attitude towards the USA with retention of the ANZUS alliance.

In foreign as in domestic politics, economic policies proved to be the Achilles' heel of the Whitlam government. The sudden raising of the world oil price in 1973 by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries fundamentally changed many aspects of world trade and finance. At this time the government was trying to extract greater returns from Australia's wealth of natural resources while simultaneously avoiding the charge that it wished to exploit consumers: a balancing act known as 'resource diplomacy'. Whitlam's desire to reach a new agreement with Japan, which would broaden the relationship into areas other than trade, was

complicated by difficulties within the trading relationship, especially the number of strikes which affected the reliability of Australian exports of iron ore and other raw materials. Although central direction of policy towards Japan had been returned to the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1970, after more than a decade under McEwen and his Trade Department officials, the diplomats found a new bureaucratic opponent in the Department of Minerals and Energy, under R.F.X. Connor as minister and Sir Lenox Hewitt as permanent head. Connor's determination to seek huge petrodollar loans from unorthodox sources to finance Australian mineral development helped trigger the political crisis which culminated in the dismissal of the Whitlam government by the governor-general, Sir John Kerr, on 11 November 1975. At this time many of the contradictions of 'resource diplomacy' remained unresolved.

The extraordinary manner in which the Whitlam government lost office fostered the belief within elements of the Labor party that the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had played some part in effecting its downfall. The American intelligence authorities, having developed a close working relationship with their Australian counterparts, apparently had reservations about some of the Whitlam government's policies. They probably exaggerated its 'anti-Americanism', and almost certainly were disturbed by breaches in security, including provocative comments by the prime minister himself. Serious allegations surfaced in 1977 which implied that the CIA had been interfering in Australian industrial and political affairs and, most serious of all, that it had helped to initiate Whitlam's dismissal. This charge has been consistently denied by Sir John Kerr. As is not surprising in the nebulous area of covert activities, no firm and irrefutable evidence has been adduced to support the allegation. While most Australians probably remained sceptical of conspiracy theories, there was, it seemed, enough circumstantial evidence to allow suspicions to grow, and these suspicions continued to influence the outlook of the left wing of the ALP well into the 1980s.

When the conservative coalition returned to office in 1975 under Malcolm Fraser, it retained many of the emphases that had been developed under Whitlam. Close and cordial links with the USA were renewed, and in line with American

The opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Melbourne, 1981, hosted by the prime minister, Malcolm Fraser.
AUSTRALIAN INFORMATION SERVICE

policy fresh emphasis was laid on the threat posed by the USSR, especially after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The friendship established with China in the early 1970s was consolidated. (As if in reaction to the extreme fears of the 1950s and 1960s, many manifestations of public and official opinion towards China in the 1970s took on a tone of equally uncritical admiration.) Fraser's two ministers for foreign affairs, Andrew Peacock (1975–80) and Anthony Street (1980–83), were active in regional diplomacy, as the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), comprising Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, developed increasingly co-ordinated policies on regional issues after the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. The least expected aspect of Fraser's foreign policy was his prominent part in the negotiations associated with the independence of Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia). This was possibly the first time Australia had played a notable part in African affairs, but it was significant that the crucial developments all took place within the context of Commonwealth diplomacy. Britain itself was by now only a minor factor in Australian external relations, even under a conservative government, but the Commonwealth, especially the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, provided a forum in which an Australian prime minister could make a personal impact on world affairs.

The coming of the Hawke Labor government in 1983 seemed to confirm that, at least in foreign policy, there was more continuity than conflict between the parties, the differences being matters of degree and nuance rather than of fundamental principles. The main conflicts seemed to be not between the government and opposition but between a government which had captured the middle ground and the left wing of its own party. The left was critical of the American alliance and especially the installations at Pine Gap, North West Cape and Nurrungar, which were regarded as likely targets in any US–Soviet nuclear exchange. The government argued that the American commitment under ANZUS 'to act ... in accordance with its constitutional processes' in the event of 'an armed attack in the Pacific Area' was a useful deterrent of which any potential aggressor would have to take careful note. The alliance also gave Australia access to American intelligence and information on weapons systems. The surveillance capabilities of the installations, by helping to monitor arms control agreements, contributed to the stability of the global power balance.

The left also opposed the Hawke government's policy of permitting a limited degree of mining and export of uranium, which they argued was inextricably linked with the production of nuclear weapons. In seeking more independence from the USA and in toying with ideas of non-alignment and armed neutrality, the left had to come to terms with the possibility that these policies might mean greater expenditure on defence and a more militarised society. Both before and after its re-election in 1984, the Hawke government was able to withstand the pressures from the left.

In the mid-1980s Australian foreign policy operated at two levels, reflecting a difference of judgment between those who saw the greatest threat to Australian security coming from changes to the central power balance between the USA, the USSR and their respective power blocs, and those who saw the principal danger coming from regional conflicts. In the first case, the deployment of new series of intermediate-range missiles in the early 1980s by the Soviets and the USA in eastern and western Europe respectively, coupled with a worsening of the propaganda war between the two superpowers, led to a renewed fear of the outbreak of nuclear war. In Australia, as elsewhere, this brought a resurgence of the peace movement, which had been largely quiescent since the Vietnam War. It also prompted the creation of a Nuclear Disarmament Party, which won a Senate

seat in the 1984 election before suffering a damaging split in 1985. The election in New Zealand in 1984 of a Labour government which opposed the admission of nuclear-powered or nuclear-armed ships to New Zealand ports added a new complexity to the picture, bringing the suspension of the operation of ANZUS as a trilateral alliance. The Australian government maintained its commitment to the American alliance, but different nuances were evident in the statements of Prime Minister Bob Hawke and Foreign Minister Bill Hayden. Hawke stated unequivocally that Australia was aligned with the USA and established a friendly rapport with President Ronald Reagan; Hayden sponsored an academic institute for peace studies, appointed an ambassador for disarmament and adopted policies at variance with those of the USA in Indo-China and central America.

In 1986, however, trade issues intervened to cloud Australia's relations with the United States. The 'dumping' of agricultural products on international markets by the European Economic Community prompted retaliatory legislation in the United States. While the two commercial giants competed by subsidising primary products at a level smaller economies could not match, highly efficient but less well-subsidised Australian wheat, beef and dairy producers saw international markets contract and prices lowered artificially. As a result, anti-Americanism, long present on the left of Australian politics, found new support among conservative rural voters. Joint-party parliamentary delegations, in Washington to seek relief for Australian farmers, stressed this point. To Bob Hawke the alliance still looked 'fundamentally sound', but he admitted: 'There's a growing potential for anti-Americanism, I'm afraid. It's a remarkable thing when I have farmers' groups ringing up my office and saying that they'll organise a march of 1000 farmers on Pine Gap.'

Michael Somare, founding prime minister of Papua New Guinea.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA HIGH COMMISSION

The second level of policy concerned Australian interests in southeast Asia and the southwest Pacific. To a degree that would have seemed almost inconceivable in the 1960s, Australia was conducting an autonomous policy in the region, taking note of the American stance as merely one among many factors. Hanoi now not only governed all of Vietnam but also dominated the other Indo-Chinese states, Laos and Kampuchea (formerly Cambodia), while the ASEAN states (augmented by Brunei in 1984) were visibly disturbed by this growth of Vietnamese power. While generally closer to ASEAN than to Indo-China, Australian policy-makers tried to maintain good relations with both groupings and sometimes hinted at attempting the role of broker between the two. Of even more immediate impact were various issues that involved Australia with its closest neighbours, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. The most notable were the status of East Timor (incorporated by military force into Indonesia in 1975) and the fate of border-crossers from Irian Jaya (formerly West New Guinea) into Papua New Guinea. For a decade after the bloody events of 1965 which removed Sukarno from power and the PKI from its considerable influence, Australian relations with the Indonesian government of President (formerly Major General) Suharto had generally been smooth, but after 1975 East Timor and the Irian Jaya border issue placed potentially serious strains on them, and in 1986 a furore prompted by an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* about Suharto's finances set back careful diplomatic efforts to improve relations with Indonesia.

In the southwest Pacific, Australia, which had for so long thought of itself as the small partner trailing imperial Britain or the American superpower, had to accustom itself to being the great power in the eyes of the island states, which varied in size from modest to minute. Australian politicians had taken a close interest in the south Pacific in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Then the area was largely ignored by Australians, who looked more to the north,

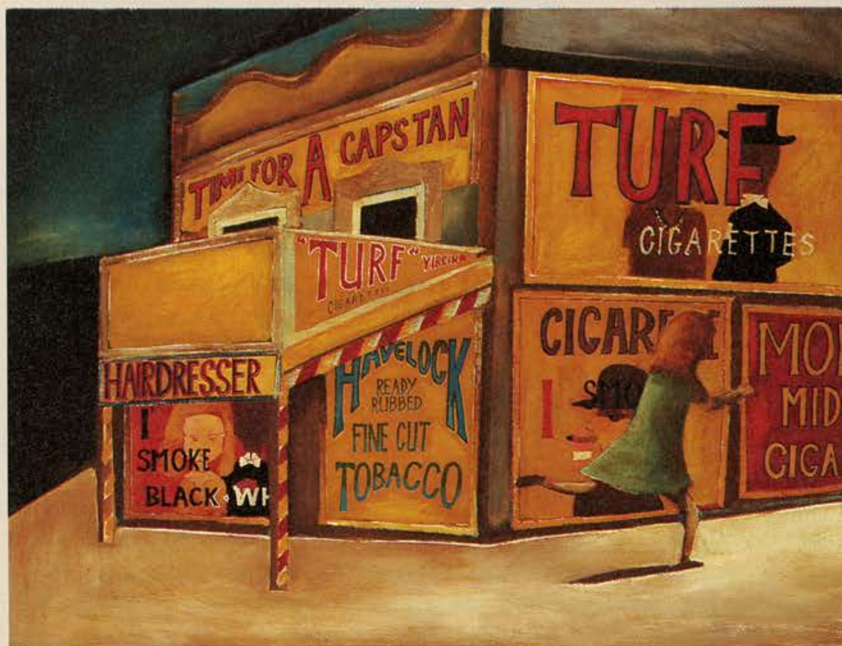
but it became prominent again in the late twentieth century as the last vestiges of European colonialism faded. Australians had also tended to neglect their relationship with New Zealand, taking trans-Tasman support and co-operation for granted. As new efforts were made in the 1980s to improve economic relations, it seemed likely that this relationship would assume greater importance in Australian foreign policy, but that it would also require greater imagination and effort.

The principal directions of Australian attention in recent decades have thus been northwards and eastwards. A new development since the late 1970s has been the emergence of the concept of the 'Indian Ocean region'. Although the countries bordering that ocean were so disparate that the regional concept seemed questionable, it at least had the merit of drawing attention to the issues affecting Australia's western approaches. In February 1987 the minister for defence, Kim Beazley, announced that the Royal Australian Navy, recognising the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean, would in future base half its fleet at Stirling, in Western Australia, leaving a reduced Pacific fleet to operate out of either Sydney or Jervis Bay, 160 kilometres to the south.

To the south, Australia had since 1956 been a partner in a successful example of international co-operation, the Antarctic treaty, which fostered scientific research and averted the possibility of competitive land claims. This came under challenge in the 1980s as some members of the UN, led by Australia's traditional friend Malaysia, asserted that the fruits of Antarctic exploration should be shared by all nations, not just those who contributed to research there under the aegis of the treaty.

Relations with Japan and China formed a link between Australia's regional interests and its concern with the central balance of power. In the mid-1980s these countries shared concern over the growth of Soviet power in Asia and the Pacific. In Australian eyes, Japan was still seen almost entirely as a major trading partner, despite many attempts to broaden the relationship into other fields. On the other hand China's culture and history exerted a stronger fascination, despite—or perhaps because of—its radically different social and political system. The presence of Britain as a major power in the Asia–Pacific region was only a distant memory.

And what of the Australians in whose name these foreign policy decisions were taken? Conscious of their isolation from the world's major centres of power and culture, Australians have long sought to go 'overseas'. In the 1930s this still meant a sea voyage of several weeks to Britain, which many Australians, even after a lifetime in the Antipodes, still referred to as 'home'. From London the Australians would venture into the rest of 'the British Isles' and thence to 'the Continent'. In the 1980s many of the thousands of Australians filling the QANTAS jumbo jets still made London their first stop, though they now regarded this city as a convenient base from which to explore Europe rather than as the centre of the mighty Empire in which Australia was a junior partner. But it was no less likely that a trip 'overseas' meant a visit to the shops of Singapore, the universities of the USA or the beaches of Bali. For individual Australians, as for those responsible for policy decisions, the world of the 1980s was a far more complex place than the world of the 1930s. The fearful saw in this complexity new threats, the optimistic saw new opportunities, and the wise tried to see both in their proper perspective.



Charles Blackman's Running home, *painted in 1954, shows the tawdry side of Australian suburbia. Tacky billboards outside a hairdresser's shop, strident in their advocacy of cigarettes and tobacco, were a familiar part of the environment in which young Australians grew up. Oil on composition board.*

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL GALLERY

II

PEOPLE AND PLACE

Peter Blayney, Hostel men I, *1982, oil on cotton. This stark portrayal of Australia's homeless emphasises the alienation and degradation that often accompanies urban life.*
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL GALLERY