Publications

Les Louis, Menzies’ Cold War: a reinterpretation

Peter Love and Paul Strangio (eds), Arguing the Cold War (Contributors include Amirah Inglis, Bernie Taft, Les Louis, Jenny Hocking, John Cotter, Rick Brown, Bruce Duncan, Bob Corcoran, John Cain, Phillip Deery and Ian Syson.)

Both books are from Red Rag Publications, PO Box 68, North Carlton, Vic 3054 $20 (incl postage) each, or $35 for both books.


Available for $27.50 (incl GST) – Add $4.50 for postage to Victoria: total $32 From Barrie Blears, 23 Mount Street, Leura, NSW 2780 Ph (02) 4782 9235


For the Library

Useful reference:


Part I is a narrative essay divided into 6 chapters. The first reviews the debates and discussions among scholars, and the next five chapters form a chronological survey of the Cold War. Part II, “The Cold War A to Z”, includes topics central to understanding the Cold War, and Part III is a “concise chronology”. Part IV, the longest, is a guide to resources (with each entry annotated).

When he died 63 Blacks served among the 8,631 special agents.)

Anne Blair, There to the Bitter End: Ted Serong in Vietnam, Allen and Unwin

Laurence Freedman, Kennedy’s Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos and Vietnam, OUP.

Richard Tomlinson, The Big Breach: From Top Secret to Maximum Security

For a free copy, in a number of formats, go to http://thebigbreach.com

Extensive measures were taken to prevent publication of this book, whose author was an ex-MI6 spy. (13 arrests, injunctions in 6 countries and a one-year prison term.)

Tomlinson has protested:

Contrary to what certain newspapers, particularly the "Daily Telegraph", the "Sunday Telegraph", and "The Times" have reported, "The Big Breach" was not in any way written, sponsored or published by Russian intelligence or any of their agents. It was written entirely by myself and the text was not added to or altered (except for minor editing changes). I have never even met or spoken to any officers or agents of Russian intelligence, let alone allowed them to have any input into the writing or publication of "The Big Breach".

My belief is that MI6 have spread these rumours through their agents in the media such as Mr Dominic Lawson, Mr Andrew Roberts, Dr Christopher Andrew and Mr Oleg Gordievsky) to disrupt sales of the book, discredit me, and to distract public opinion from the central theme of the book, namely that MI6 needs better legal and democratic oversight.

Not recommended:

Stella Rimington, Open Secret: the Autobiography of the Former Director-General of MI5, Random House

As she had agreed to thorough vetting, we shall never know what secrets she might have been prepared to reveal. One indefatigable spook catcher, David Turner had the satisfaction of confronting her at the book launch (dst@canterbury.u-net.com).

Research News

From January 2002 Phillip Deery is spending six months at New York University’s International Center for Advanced Studies. The Center has commenced a three-year project entitled ‘The Cold War as Global Conflict’. The first annual theme, to which Phillip will contribute, focuses on War and Peace, 1945-2000; the second year looks at Everyday Life and Culture during the Cold War; the third at History and Governance. Initially, the project will challenge the usual chronology and geography of the Cold War as an East-West conflict that commenced in 1945 and ended in 1989. That interpretation does not provide a way of understanding decolonisation, national liberation, social revolution and civil war that preceded and followed the Cold War. In short, the project seeks to rethink the dominant paradigms of the Cold War. Phillip’s research will focus on the Cold War in Southeast Asia, especially Malaya, from the perspective of non-military and clandestine intervention. Phillip is currently working on an article provisionally entitled ‘The Dove Flies East: Whitehall, Warsaw and the World Peace Council’.
Frank Cain has been concentrating on Jack Lang lately.

He is also collecting archival material dealing with the control of British exports of computers in the 1960's to the Soviet Union and Communist China. This was an attempt by the British government to establish markets in the East for this new technology, but because the British-made computers contained some US-made components, US officialdom raised objections. Frank's study will be an analysis of the renewed tensions between the UK and US over how far the Cold War restrictions on East-West trade in the 1960s would be allowed to curtail important British trading endeavours to maintain its high-technology exports.

New at NLA - Manuscripts
WD Forsyth (External Affairs) MS 5700

National Archives
Lists of records about British nuclear tests in Australia, Fact Sheet 129, available at www.naa.gov.au


Notes from the Archives

The Cold War, W.C. Wentworth and the Atom Bomb
By Phillip Deery

In late 1952 the nuclear physicist Professor Marcus Oliphant, then director of the Research School of Physical Sciences at the newly-established Australian National University, invited his friend and colleague Patrick Blackett to visit Australia. Blackett had been Professor of Physics at Oxford University’s Birbeck College from 1933 and Manchester University from 1937. He won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1948, published an internationally-acclaimed book, The Military and Political Consequences of Atomic War, in 1949, and became Pro-Vice Chancellor of Manchester University in 1950. He was vice-president of the Atomic Scientists’ Association and a member of the important UK Advisory Committee on Atomic Energy.¹

Unlike Oliphant, Blackett was an advocate of atomic disarmament. But the Australian security service was not especially perturbed by this fact or by his visit to these shores. According to ASIO Blackett was ‘an independent thinker whose views are not acceptable to the Communists, although they might coincide on particular issues’.² William Charles Wentworth, on the other hand, was extremely agitated. On 16 February 1953, he wrote a ‘confidential’ letter to the Attorney General’s Department. In the light of Blackett’s imminent arrival, it was ‘a matter of urgency’. Given both Blackett’s impressive credentials and the comparatively positive ASIO assessment, what Wentworth wrote affords a sharp insight not only into the overheated imaginings of one man but into the fevered atmosphere that then prevailed. To most cold warriors in the early 1950s, the threat of World War III was ominous, ‘fifth column’ agents of the Soviet Union were ubiquitous and espionage had undermined Western defences. Ruthless vigilance was necessary if the clock were to be stopped at ‘five minutes to midnight’. This, then, is some of the context for Wentworth’s remarkable statement.

So far as I can see, Blackett is a top Communist agent and perhaps is the top Communist agent in Britain. If my appraisal…is correct, he has so far accomplished far more than any Fuchs and is a far more deadly person.³
W.C. Wentworth, the Liberal MHR for Mackellar, was an ardent and virulent anti-communist crusader.\textsuperscript{4} A few months prior to his election to Parliament in December 1949, he was involved in the notorious ‘Diver’ Dobson case in which communists, during the 1949 coal strike, were accused, wrongly, of attempted murder. In 1951, as part of his efforts to assist the work of ASIO, he became a ‘sleeping member’ of various organisations allegedly penetrated by the Communist Party.\textsuperscript{5} In June 1952, he drafted legislation intended to outlaw the Communist Party and ‘strike at [its] real nerve’; its draconian provisions went much further than Menzies’ 1950 Communist Party Dissolution Bill.\textsuperscript{6} That same month he labelled Dr R.E.B. (Dick) Makinson, an Australian physicist at Sydney University, ‘an embryo Dr Fuchs’.\textsuperscript{7}

Klaus Fuchs, to whom Wentworth compared both Blackett and Makinson, was the German-born British atomic physicist who, along with Oliphant, worked first at Los Alamos on the Manhattan project and then at Britain’s Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell. In 1950 he confessed to passing vital atomic secrets to the Soviets including a detailed description of the design of the plutonium bomb.\textsuperscript{8} The record of the interrogations of Fuchs, conducted by MI5 on 30 January and 22 March 1950, which was given a ‘Top Secret’ status, was declassified and released by the Public Record Office in September 2001. Part of it reads:

I formed the impression that throughout the interview, Fuchs was genuinely trying to remember and report all the information that he had given to the Russian agents with which he had been in contact and that he was not withholding anything. He seemed, on the contrary, to be trying his best to help me to evaluate the present position of atomic energy work in Russia in the light of the information that he had, and had not, passed to them.\textsuperscript{9}

Even had he been aware of Fuchs’ cooperative attitude – and this has not been disclosed until now – Bill Wentworth’s fears would not have been assuaged. In the area of atomic testing and development, he continued to press for a tougher response, particularly from Great Britain, towards the Soviet Union. In early 1955 he wrote directly to the Prime Minister, to ‘My dear Winston’:

I am wondering whether you would spare a moment to see me…As a member of the Australian Parliament who has been most interested in the atomic crisis as it has developed over the past years, I have come to Britain to find what I can on both technical and policy aspects, and already I have been shown much…I am the more anxious to see you because I have felt critical in some degrees of past British and American policy, as having been altogether too weak and shifting.\textsuperscript{10}

When Churchill’s private secretary, Montague Brown, informed Wentworth that the Prime Minister could not see him due to ‘heavy engagements’, a second letter followed. Wentworth hoped that Churchill would not resent the ‘frankness’ of his letter. Wentworth was clearly anxious to display his credentials on this topic. He was referring, presumably, to Clement Attlee, when he stated that ‘I as a backbencher in Australia was far better informed than the Prime Minister of England on the matter which was the crux of world history’.\textsuperscript{11} His letter was highly hubristic.

I stayed in England to hear the defence debate and particularly your own speech at which nobody could fail to be impressed. However on one crucial question of fact, I find myself in disagreement with you. I think you have altogether under-estimated Russia’s capacity for producing H-bombs in the present…I am not disposed to accept your view uncritically however much I would like to do so. You will be the first to realise that the policy which should be
advocated if you are correct is quite different from the policy which be advocated if you are wrong…If Russia already has saturation stocks, time has already run out and an entirely different approach is called for. 12

Other than a marginal handwritten annotation, ‘I do not agree with Mr Wentworth. WSC’, there is no record, at least in this file, of Churchill’s opinion of Wentworth. A senior Whitehall official, H. Smedley, was more forthcoming: ‘There is certainly no need for the PM to see him…Mr Wentworth seems to be getting wilder and wilder in his ideas on thermo nuclear war’.13

Having failed to secure a ‘personal talk’ with Churchill, Wentworth left for the United States ‘to find out what I can there’. Again, with excessive hubris, he informed Churchill that for the following five weeks he could be contacted through the Australian Embassy in Washington. Churchill did not bother. But Bill Wentworth, most likely, would have remained undaunted and unrepentant – there were still far too many Cold War battles to be fought abroad and at home.

2 NAA A432/15, 53/2212. In contrast, Oliphant’s ASIO file records persistent allegations from ‘particularly reliable sources’ that he was an under-cover member of the Communist Party. A laboratory manager in the Research School of Physical Sciences at ANU was the informant who supplied ASIO with ‘incriminating’ details. His name is discernible in one of Oliphant’s files; see NAA A6119/62, 453, folios 14-15. For a summary of Oliphant’s distinguished scientific career, see The Age, 18 July 2000, p.2. For a less charitable obituary, see Roland Perry, ‘The Professor and the atom bomb’, The Age, 22 July 2000, p.2 (News Extra). For the Cold War smears of Oliphant, see Stewart Cockburn and David Ellyard, Oliphant (Adelaide: Axiom Books, 1981), ch.14. His unsuccessful struggle to obtain a visa to visit the US in 1951 is documented in NAA A1838/300, 1252/2/99.
3 NAA A432/15, 53/2212. This file was opened on 18 May 2001.
4 In some parliamentary circles he was known, unaffectionately, as ‘the mad mullah from Mackellar’.

 Spy News

Continuing Threats to Civil liberties:

Ken Buckley comments on The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Amendment Bill 1999 (passed 25 Nov 1999)

Origins It appears that the Bill was primarily based upon a confidential report to the federal Attorney-General’s Department by G Walsh, a former Director-General of ASIO. Walsh was concerned about the rapid development of encryption technologies which enabled voice and data communications over the internet to be ‘scrambled’. He regarded this development as a threat to ASIO’s capacity to spy effectively, so Walsh called for certain
‘interim’ and ‘minor’ changes in legislation, pending later major legislative action as the technology develops.

Main Provisions of the Bill  At the core of the Bill are new powers accorded to ASIO for intrusive investigation. This mainly relates to the issuing of search warrants by the Attorney-General. Under earlier legislation, ASIO already had power to use such warrants for the purpose of tapping telephones, bugging premises and intercepting mail. Under the Bill of 1999, this secret system is substantially extended and strengthened in various ways by:

1. Authorising ASIO to ‘hack’ into computers to gain access to computer information in circumstances where such access is otherwise prohibited by law. This power applies to ‘remote access’ as well as examination of computers found on premises the subject of a search warrant.

2. Authorising ASIO to add, delete or alter data in the target computer, and to do anything necessary to conceal ASIO’s activity under the warrant.

3. Giving ASIO power to use ‘reasonable force’ in acting under the warrant.

4. Authorising ASIO to use tracking devices to track people or objects including interference with property.

5. Lengthening the maximum duration of search warrants and making them easier (less rigorous requirements) for ASIO to obtain. Computer access warrants may last up to 6 months.

6. Expanding the range of search warrants which the Director-General of ASIO may issue on an emergency basis without prior approval by the Attorney-General. (Previously, this power was confined to the issue of listening device warrants.)

7. Authorising ASIO, under warrant, to access an article being delivered by a ‘delivery service provider’ (i.e. a private agency). Previously, such power was limited to ASIO inspection of postal articles.

Additionally to the above warrant provisions, the Bill provides for:

8. Access by ASIO to AUSTRAC information about significant and suspect financial transactions; and

9. Access by ASIO to confidential tax information where relevant to ASIO functions. This done through consequential amendments to the Taxation Administration Act.

The ALP supported the Bill, confining itself to proposing a couple of amendments to wording. The role of the media in the affair was shameful, with newspapers virtually ignoring the whole subject. One result was that the Council for Civil liberties was not alerted to the contents of the Bill until late November 1999, by which time it was too late to mount a campaign of opposition.

It should be noted that even before the current changes, the Acts of 1979 and 1986 gave ASIO important exemptions or limitations from ordinary standards of public accountability. Thus decisions by the Attorney-General to grant warrants for search or surveillance are exempt from the Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977; ASIO is an exempt organisation for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act 1982; and ASIO is exempt from the requirements to handle personal information in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988.

And all this before the “war on terrorism”, U.S. military tribunals and draconian powers for ASIO.
Cold War Dossier 9

FBI Kept Tabs on Helen Keller
By Kenneth Pringle

From APBnews.com

J. Edgar Hoover was so concerned with the communist scare during the Cold War that his FBI even turned its suspicions on Helen Keller, champion of the blind and handicapped.

The FBI did not launch a full-scale investigation into Keller, but did keep a 43-page file on her. According to a Feb 8, 1943, FBI letter signed by W.R. Glavin, Keller was cited along with Einstein, Brandeis and 19 others for possible membership in “the Communist, Nazi or Fascist parties”. Also on the list were noted civil rights workers and educators Mary Mcleod Bethune and Charlotte Hawkins Brown.

A later page accuses Keller of being a supporter of a group known as the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, which is accused of “supporting and defending Russian foreign policy” and opposing American policy. She again finds herself among such well-known figures as Raymond Massey, New York City Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, and Einstein yet again.

Another section, dated July 1, 1953, compiles a number of newspaper stories that somehow connect Keller with communist organisations and people. Her support of the loyalist cause in the Spanish Civil War is of particular interest.

Also in the FBI file are a number of letters Keller sent directly to Hoover, requesting his help. In one, Keller pleadingly asks Hoover to use his power, influence and “noble impulses” to help so that: “those who cannot see and hear may regain life’s goodness and the dignity of useful work,” and escape the “tomb of the mind and a dungeon of the body.”

When forwarded to Hoover, the curt reply was: “This letter not to be acknowledged.”

MI5 planned to use gerbil spycatchers
By Richard Norton-Taylor

MI5 sleuths planned to use gerbils to trap secret agents, terrorists, and subversives during the cold war, Britain’s top counterspy revealed yesterday.

Gerbils can scent increased adrenalin from sweat – an instinct which makes them the perfect detector of people up to no good. Or so security boffins thought.

The wheeze was disclosed by Sir Stephen Lander, the head of MI5, at a conference for academics at the Public Record Office in Kew, south-west London. A hitherto unnoticed file in the archives refers to the ”security use of gerbils”, Sir Stephen said. What he did not disclose is that the wrong kind of people would be arrested.

The idea that the small furry pets could be employed as spycatchers was first mooted by Canadian scientists in the 1970s. The plan was to place a cage of gerbils by the immigration desks at airports on the side of the queue of passengers, an electric fan would discreetly blow the scent of excess sweat in the direction of the cage. The gerbils would get excited and in a trained Pavlovian response they would push a lever, pointing the (metaphorical) finger of suspicion at the suspect.

Most national security agencies were wary of such a scheme. It was, however put into
operation by Shin Bet – the Israeli internal security service – at Tel Aviv airport.

Until, that is, it found that instead of catching spies or terrorists, the gerbils caught innocent victims who were giving away their terror of flying.

British security sources also pointed out that the gerbils could not distinguish between sweat produced by a nervous spy and passengers suffering from carrying heavy baggage.

The gerbil trap proved less successful than other schemes featuring in an exhibition at the PRO, Shaken not Stirred. The exhibition, which opens today, describes how MI5 trained peregrine falcons to intercept enemy pigeons used to convey secret messages.

[Thank you to Dr David Turner for that and other contributions.]

Nukes Next Door


In August 1962 then prime minister Harold Macmillan ‘personally authorised the storage of nuclear weapons” at RAF Tengah in Singapore, the report said, citing declassified official British documents.

“Facilities were introduced for handling nuclear weapons in transit in a number of countries,” it added, noting that in Singapore the weapons were stored aboard Royal Navy vessels.

The first tactical nuclear weapon – the so-called Red Beard carried by Scimitar aircraft aboard aircraft carriers – had been originally viewed as suitable for sinking ships in the North Atlantic.

By the time it entered service however, it was viewed as a potential arm for deployment in a limited Far East war.

The report says declassified files show that neither Malaysia’s Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman – Singapore was then a part of the Malay Federation – nor Cyprus’s leader Archbishop Makarios, knew of the deployment.


D (Departure) Notices

Allan Percy Fleming (1912 – 2001)

After war service, was appointed Director of the Joint Intelligence Bureau, then became Controller of Joint Intelligence before serving as Assistant Secretary 1949–1953, and Controller of the Joint Services Organisation (1953–1958). Later he held senior positions in the Department of Trade and Industry, and finally became Parliamentary Librarian and then National Librarian.

Contributions to:

Les Louis
3/59 Melba Street
Downer ACT 2602
02 62622404
OR
e-mail to: les_louis@hotmail.com