Publications


For the Library


**David Owen**, *Hidden Secrets*, New Burlington Books. (Not “a complete history of espionage” but many photographs.)

**Robert J Stove**, *The Unsleeping Eye: A Brief History of the Secret Police*, Duffy & Snellgrove. (Even more potted.)


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With many such detailed studies now available, a welcome and necessary advance in Cold War
Current Research

Rowan Cahill is working on the second half of his memoir of growing up in the post-war period and being a 60’s radical, (Cold War Kid). He has received a Search Foundation grant to bring the project to a conclusion.

David Lowe In January, David delivered the annual Trevor Reese Memorial Lecture for the Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, King's College London, on 'Percy Spender and the American Century' (which is now in print and available from the Centre).

In addition to his continuing work on Spender, he is researching Australia's involvement in the Colombo Plan, a story in which foreign policy intersects with cultural diplomacy. He has a journal article on this subject appearing in the Journal of South Asian Studies later this year.

Craig McLean (Victoria University of Technology) has completed his PhD thesis which promises to be very interesting:

This thesis is concerned with the Menzies Government and ASIO’s responses to the threat posed by the Communist inspired peace movement during the early Cold War period, between 1949 and 1959. The thesis will particularly focus on the Government’s efforts to restrict the movements of peace activists through the imposition of travel controls, most notably passport bans.

The first chapter will focus on the background to the establishment of the Menzies Government, ASIO and the Australian Peace Council during 1949. It will look at the forces and circumstances which led to the establishment of these vastly different reactions to the prevailing Cold War climate. Chapter two will commence discussion about the Menzies Government’s travel policy during the first three years of the administration. The Government’s actions in regard to peace initiatives such as the Second World Peace Congress in Warsaw in 1950 and the Berlin Youth Festival in 1951 will be looked at in an effort to determine the Government’s attitude toward travel abroad by peace activists. The Government’s response to proposed visits to Australia by foreign peace activists for peace conferences, most notably the Melbourne Peace Congress in 1950 and the Sydney Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship in early 1952, will also be discussed in an effort to establish the Government’s attitude toward travel policy. It is the aim of this chapter to illustrate the birth and early development of the Menzies Government’s travel policy in relation to the intense Cold War atmosphere.
Chapter three will focus on the Government’s travel policy between 1952 and 1955. The most controversial event of the period, the 1952 Peking Peace Conference will be discussed in this chapter. The Government’s decision to implement passport bans against the Australian delegation will be looked at, as will the efforts of the Australian delegation to subvert the ban. This chapter will highlight the evolution of the Menzies Government’s travel policy, and will show how this policy affected the peace movement throughout the period. Discussion will also revolve around how the changing Cold War climate affected the Government’s activities in the sphere of travel controls. The influence of events such as the Korean War and the Petrov affair will demonstrate how the Government was influenced by external circumstances.

The discussion in chapter four will revolve around ASIO’s role in monitoring and hampering the efforts of the peace movement. ASIO’s understanding of the threat posed by the peace movement and its response to this threat will be the focus of this chapter. Of particular interest will be the security organisation’s response to the various peace conferences which were held at regular intervals throughout the period. The way in which ASIO’s understanding of the peace movement evolved over time, and the ways in which the Government actions were influenced by the work of the security organisation will also be discussed. Chapter five will look at the controversy surrounding the Australian and New Zealand Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament. This chapter will disclose the Government’s activities in regard to this Congress, with particular emphasis being placed on the roles played by acting Minister for External Affairs Garfield Barwick, and the Director-General of Security, Charles Spry, in relation to the Congress. This aspect of the Government’s ‘war on Communism’ has largely been ignored.

**Archives**

1951 Cabinet Notebooks (A11099).
Transcripts are available in the Reading Room at the Australian Archives, Canberra. Entries are usually jottings, and only occasionally fuller discussions. For example:

“Uranium – Spooner, Kent Hughes, McBride, Harrison & PM. *If UK is easy – I wld agree to sale – Enquire in London –*”

Sometimes these are sufficient to give an indication of a Minister’s stand on a particular issue. On a quick reading, there do not appear to be revelations not otherwise available.

**Cold War Obscenities**
**SMH 25/5/2002**  The United States Defense Department sprayed live nerve and biological agents on ships and sailors during Cold War-era experiments to test the navy’s vulnerability to toxic warfare.

Pentagon papers reveal that six tests were carried out in the Pacific from 1964 to 1968. Three used sarin, a nerve agent, or VX, a nerve gas, and one used staphylococcal enterotoxin B, known as SEB, a biological toxin.

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**Canberra Times 16/03/2002**  In 1947 Sir Macfarlane Burnet (who was to win the Nobel Prize in 1960) recommended that Australia conduct research into biological weapons. In his first year as a member of Australia’s Defence Research and Development Policy Committee, Burnet proposed that Australia should research the potential for biological weapons to be used against crops and humans in tropical areas. It reflected his concern of “threatened invasion by over-populated Asiatic countries”.

“It was regarded as a legitimate – in inverted commas – type of warfare,” recalls Professor Frank Fenner, then a new recruit in Burnet’s research team at Melbourne’s Walter and Eliza Hall Institute.

In 1972, however, when Burnet participated in a Monday Conference debate on ABC television with Sir Philip Baxter (then the former chairman of the Australian Atomic Energy Commission) and Baxter said that Australia might have to consider the use of chemical and nuclear weapons to keep out refugees, Burnet did not support this, saying, “I see the logic of his view on defence, I just don’t like the sound of it.

“You’ve just got to batter them off, keep them away and look after your own survival,” he said of boat people.

**Cuba / Armageddon?**

*The St. Petersburg Times 24/4/2001.* Last year after a viewing in Moscow of Kevin Costner’s film about the Cuban Missile Crisis “Thirteen Days”, a group of American and former Soviet political and military chiefs discussed Kennedy’s decision not to invade Cuba and precipitate nuclear war. General Mikhail Titov (chief of the operational department of the command staff of the Russian armed forces in Cuba in 1962) told a reporter, “Kennedy saved our lives. Our command on Cuba did not have the authority to use nukes even if the Americans attacked. As the missile crisis developed, the Kremlin even took away the right to use tactical nuclear weapons. If attacked, we would have begun to phone Moscow. When and if concrete instructions would have been issued, the air offensive would have wiped out all our missiles.”

**The War on Communism / Terrorism**

“We don’t want to defend our democracy by destroying the very elements of that democracy which makes it so special”

Law Council of Australia secretary-general Michael Lavarch on proposed anti-terrorism laws allowing spy agency ASIO to detain suspects for up to 48 hours without charge. (2002)

Allan Martin’s judgement on Menzies’ justification for the Communist Party Dissolution Bill (1950) in terms of the security of Australia is that “this conviction bred a form
of fanaticism which enabled Menzies to argue in this speech against even that basic element in the British system of justice, trial by jury.”

And he turns against Menzies his own words at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference: “It was all too easy to discover, that in attempting to repress subversion or aggression, one had in fact been suppressing freedom of thought.” But Menzies had dismissed the dilemma with the facile assertion, “Much as I love liberty, I am not prepared to concede freedom to the enemies of freedom.” (Robert Menzies, Vol 2, pp. 171, 178, 191).

D (Departure) Notices

Allan Martin

With the death of Allan Martin on 31 May, we have lost an outstanding scholar and gentleman. Always generous in his recognition of the work of others, he maintained a keen interest in the Cold War research of younger historians, and warmly welcomed our Cold War Dossier. Any shortcomings of Menzies Vol 2 reflect the fact that he was too decent and fair-minded to empathise fully with such a consummate professional politician. If on controversial issues he tended to favour Menzies, Allan also provided the evidence for the contrary viewpoint.

Helen Levitov Sobell (1918 – 2002)

Her second husband was Morton Sobell, a co-defendant with Julius and Ethel Rosenberg who were executed in 1953 for espionage. He received a 30-year sentence and was sent to Alcatraz, specifically in the hope that he would crack and incriminate other members of what the FBI alleged was an extensive spy ring. Helen Sobell led a national campaign for the release of her husband; and her life story makes stirring reading. Evidence from Venona and Soviet Archives has shattered the illusion of Julius Rosenberg as totally innocent martyr, but Morton Sobell’s status remains unclear. (SMH 18/5/2002 reprint from the The Guardian)

Radio-active Trivia

Highlighted items of the Canberra Antiquarian and Rare Book Fair include a leather-bound Bible from Maralinga signed by personnel from the atomic weapon testing site.

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