Research Update

PhD Theses


John Moss (UNE) on Australian-New Zealand defence relations with the working title, “Influence without Power: The interaction of bilateral Australasian dialogue with Australian Defence Policy 1944-1972”.

Theses Completed


PhD Theses on Hold

John Steinbach, (Deakin) is retiring from the RAAF after 37 years and moving to Brisbane. He will resume after this disruption.

Dianne Avenell (Victoria) – best wishes for a speedy recovery and early resumption.

Theses Progress Report

Rachael Calkin reports: The topic I began with for my MA thesis was a comparative study of the impact of the year 1956 on the Communist Parties of Australia and Great Britain. The reason for the comparative study was the lack of systematic research on the fallout from Khrushchev’s secret speech and the Hungarian uprising during 1956, specifically in Australia. However, trips to the National Archives in Canberra in particular have revealed files that offer a wealth of information concerning the impact of the events of that year on both the leadership and membership of the CPA. Attending a Sunday afternoon discussion at Trades Hall during 2000 and more recently, in May 2003, a seminar in Sydney (see below) have highlighted the importance of 1956 for many CPA members, even today. Consequently, my thesis now is concerned with the impact of the secret speech in February and the Hungarian uprising in October 1956 on the Australian Party alone.

The challenge for me has been to bring together many individual accounts of meetings, articles written at the time, personal recollections and official Party literature to develop a cohesive picture of how the Party, both the leadership and members, reacted to and dealt with, the events of that year. The picture that has emerged is somewhat at odds with the accepted view. Those who have commented on the fallout from the Secret Speech, in particular, have traditionally highlighted the leadership’s attempts to stifle discussion on the topic, an approach that led to many members leaving the Party. My research suggests that the leadership, at least initially, were inconsistent in the way they handled member’s requests for discussion, creating the impression
that they were uncertain how to manage the significant ramifications that were emerging. It wasn’t until E.F. Hill returned to Australia in late September 1956, after attending both the CPSU and Chinese Party congresses that the Party began to take a more resolute and unforgiving approach to calls for discussion.

I have attempted to chronicle events as they occurred to highlight the changing position of the CPA leadership up until Hill’s return, portraying the often contradictory messages being presented to the membership in various forums, such as Communist Review, Tribune and branch meetings. While the leadership’s approach was far from consistent, the reactions of members were also varied. There is much information concerning the reactions of prominent members such as Ian Turner, Stephen Murray-Smith, Helen Palmer, Jim Staples and Jack Blake. Their vocal opposition to the lack of discussion on the revelations about Stalin and the Hungarian uprising led to their dismissals, departures or reduced influence within the Party. Jack Blake’s written recollections are a particularly rich source of information, a vivid description of the personal price paid by some. Little, however, is available on the reactions of the rank and file membership. While members at the Locomotion, Traffic and Carriage branches called for open discussion, individuals such as the late Pauline Armstrong were more focussed on establishing a library for their local community. The last stage of my primary research is to seek the recollections from as many rank and file members as possible, to enable a fuller picture of the impact of 1956 than has previously been available.

Rachael is an MA student at Victoria University, Melbourne and her email address is:

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Research Interests

Ian Syson, ASIO, Intellectuals and Defectors.

Drew Cottle, The Right and the Labour Movement during the Cold war (Drew is preparing a conference paper on Douglas Darby).

Drew Cottle, Australian state assistance to Croatia “freedom fighters” in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Laurence W. Maher, The Courts, the Law and the Cold War.

Frank Cain, US Conduct of the Trade War in the Cold War.


Les Louis, Class, the State and the Cold War.

David Lowe, Percy Spender.

Andrew Moore and John Perkins are exploring the possibility of interesting Labour History in a special thematic on the far right in Australia and would be interested to hear from prospective contributors.

Contact best via e-mail at a.moore@uws.edu.au or the following institutional address:

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Publications


Jenny Hocking, *Terror Laws: ASIO, counter-terrorism and the threat to democracy*, UNSW Press, Oct 2003 (Covering Australia's internal security from ASIO's formation to latest counter-terrorism developments including ASIO's detention powers.)

**For the Library**


**THE GREAT SCHISM - LABOR 1955 - FIFTY YEARS LATER**

**A CALL FOR CONFERENCE PAPERS**

2005 is the fiftieth anniversary of the Split in the ALP that determined the course of Australian politics for a generation. To recognise this historic event a two-day conference is planned in Melbourne on 15-16 April 2005.

We would very much like to receive ideas for papers to be delivered at the conference.

As well as investigating the causes and effects of the Split, the place of religion in a secular society, the place of ideology and the role of personalities, we are keen to seek new perspectives on this watershed event in Australian society. Please contact any one of the co-ordinators by email.

Paul Strangio
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**Forthcoming Conferences**

Phillip Deery at [Phillip.Deery@vu.edu.au](mailto:Phillip.Deery@vu.edu.au) would like to contact people interested in writing a paper for a possible 'Cold War history' theme for the next AHA Biennial Conference (Newcastle, 5-9 July 2004).

**Conference Reports**

In July 2003, Phillip Deery presented a paper entitled “From Cominform to the Coalfields: Labor-Communist Party relations during the early Cold War” to the inaugural UK-Australia Labour History conference in Manchester. His UK ‘partner’, Neil Redfern gave a paper from the British perspective, “No Lasting Peace: the impact of the
Rachael Calkin: On the 18\textsuperscript{th} May this year the Sydney branch of the Labour History Society hosted a half day seminar, inviting four previous members of the Communist Party - R.D. (Bob) Walshe, Eric Aarons, Elaine Bryant and Bob Gould - to speak on the topic ‘\textit{1956: Remembering and Reflecting}’.

Both Bob Walshe and Eric Aarons discussed the events following Khrushchev’s ‘secret speech’. Bob discussed his experience reading the speech in the \textit{New York Times} weekly supplement for the first time. His friend Jim Staples had passed it onto him, a move that eventually led to both being dismissed from the party. Eric focussed on the events that led up to the eventual release of the statement concerning the Speech from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and how this period was a confusing one for the CPA leadership. He commented that the Party leadership in Australia was not particularly united at this time and that the issues raised in the CPA by the events of 1956 were not ones that could have been resolved by discussion alone.

Elaine began her talk by suggesting that she was not as ‘scholarly’ as either Bob or Eric. However, her recollections provided a personal account of the impact these international events had on her and her husband’s day to day lives. Her description of how her husband, during a particular meeting, put three motions to their local branch to have the content of the Speech discussed, only to be outvoted each time, was particularly revealing.

Bob Gould was also someone for whom the initial reading of the Speech was convincing. In his particularly passionate talk he raised with Eric Aarons the issue of a New Zealand comrade informing the Political Committee of the CPA of the authenticity of the Speech. The way the leadership dealt with requests for discussion was disillusioning for him and he did not attend Party meetings after this time.

The passionate discussion that took place during question time could well have continued into the early evening, had it not been for the fact that we had to vacate the building. In addition to the information I had collected for my thesis, it was particularly interesting to me that the presenters and the 20 or so people in the audience were so vitally interested in these events, nearly 50 years on. I would like to thank the speakers and the organisers (especially Rowan Cahill) for arranging the seminar and for being so astute in their selection of a topic for discussion!

(See also \textit{The Hummer}, Vol. 3, No. 10, 2003

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Frank Cain, in July 2003 attended the annual \textit{Conference of the International Intelligence History Association} at the University of Halle in Wittenberg, Germany, titled 'Intelligence and Political Enemies - Intelligence and Terrorism in the 20th Century'. Frank held discussions with the editorial committee, of which he is a member, of the Association’s \textit{Journal of Intelligence History} while in Wittenberg. Frank later gave a lecture on war and politics at the Free University in Berlin.
**Australian Archives Sources**

The recently opened CIS/ASIO Series A9108/3 contains extensive, detailed information on the Communist Party. The items:
- Roll 20/1, ACP Printed Propaganda
- Roll 20/2, ACP Printed Propaganda
- Roll 20/7, Communism Printed Propaganda in Victoria
- Roll 20/22, Communism Printed Propaganda in South Australia, include some copies of pamphlets and leaflets, for example, “Civvy Street”, a 35 page policy for returned servicemen.

**Sources**

**Malayan Defence Agreement.**
**Future of Commonwealth Strategic Reserve.**
**Availability of Nuclear Weapons for the Australian Forces**

1) It is understood that NATO forces now have an atomic capability, and reference was made by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations during his discussions with the P.M last week to the fact that RAF Canberra’s allotted to NATO have such a capability.

2) The effectiveness of the Australian Forces would be considerably increased if they were equipped with low-yield kilo-ton nuclear weapons.

3) The Australian Government would be glad to have the views of the UK government on the possibility of Australia obtaining such weapons.

4) This enquiry is purely exploratory and non-committal and is designed only to obtain the reaction of the UK government to the suggestion. Should any arrangement to this end be possible, the matter would need to be fully examined in the light of the conditions under which the weapons might be made available.

5) In considering the enquiry, the UK government will recall-
   a) Australia’s contribution to the UK nuclear weapons development programme by assisting to mount trials, particularly in the provision of suitable territory.
   b) Our production of a considerable amount of uranium.
   c) Our considerable contribution to the development of means of delivery of nuclear weapons through the Joint United Kingdom/Australia Long Range Weapons Project.

**Source:** NLA: Menzies Papers, MS4936 Series 19, Box 435, Folder 7, Pt. IV.
(Contributed by Adrian Threlfall, Honours student Victoria University of Technology.)

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**Documents on Australian Foreign Policy** (now up to Vol. 17, The ANZUS Treaty) are now on line at:

Chris Taylor reports it is easily usable and - from working on it for some time and comparing other countries'
equivalent WWW productions - it is the most user-friendly and flexibly searchable of such historical projects. Given that several volumes are now out of print it is an invaluable historical resource. The structure is like the books themselves and a (Cold War-related) example is:

360 Shedden to Burton
Letter, CANBERRA, 7 April 1948
TOP SECRET AND PERSONAL

CONTROL OF DOCUMENTS RECEIVED FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM GOVERNMENT

Sir Percy Sillitoe, Head of M.I.5 of the War Office, recently came to Australia on the direction of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, to acquaint the Prime Minister with information, which had come to the knowledge of the United Kingdom Authorities, that a copy of United Kingdom Post-Hostilities Planning Paper PHP(45)6(0) Final - Security in the Western Mediterranean and the Eastern Atlantic, had come into the possession of the U.S.S.R. It was alleged that the copy had been obtained from an agent in Australia.

2. As the Defence Department was the recipient of this document, the matter was referred to me initially for investigation and report on the system of control, circulation, and custody of secret United Kingdom Staff and Planning Papers in the Defence Department, and on the reliability of officers who handle these documents. This has been done, and an examination of our records shows: -

(i) That none of the copies of this document are missing.
(ii) That it was circulated to the three Service Members of the Joint Planning Committee and the Secretary to the Committee.
(iii) That it was also furnished to Mr. Milner, who was apparently the External Affairs Representative on the Post Hostilities Planning Committee at the time, in accordance with a request of 6th November 1945 from him (copy attached).

Mr. Milner had the document from 15th November 1945 to 19th February 1946, and a copy of United Kingdom Paper PHP(45)15(0) Final - Security of India and the Indian Ocean - was forwarded to him at the same time.

Mr. Milner later obtained Paper PHP(45)6(0) again, and had it from 6th March 1946 to 28th March 1946.

3. Dr. Evatt suggested, at a Conference with the Prime Minister this morning, that I should communicate the above to you in order that you could look into the matter in so far as your Department is concerned, and submit a report to your Minister. I also enclose Copy No. 109 of Paper PHP(45)6(0) Final, and shall be glad if you will return it in due course.[1]

[1] Burton sent an interim reply on 9 April asking 'what has occurred recently to raise the matter of a leakage which took place some years ago? In what form did the leakage take place?'

[AA : A6691, AS3/1, SECTION 6]
Nuclear Mines “to Stop Soviets”

Jamie Wilson reported in *The Guardian*, 17/7/2003, that Britain had secret plans at the height of the cold war to bury nuclear landmines in parts of Germany to thwart a Soviet attack. The 10 proposed devices would have had the combined explosive power of more than five Nagasaki A-bombs, resulting in craters more than 180 metres (600ft) deep and would have spread radioactive contamination across vast areas of the countryside if detonated.

The weapons, codenamed Blue Peacock, were to be left buried or submerged and detonated by a wire from up to three miles away or by an eight-day clockwork timer.

David Hawkings, a former employee of the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) at Aldermaston, Berkshire, found details of the project in unclassified Army documents from the 1950s released by the National Archives at Kew.

Weighing in at more than seven tonnes, the size of the devices meant that testing of the steel hull had to be done in public places including at a flooded gravel pit near Sevenoaks, Kent.

Mr Hawkings wrote that the cover story was that an insulated container was being tested.

If a nuclear link was suspected, the story would be that the device was to house "an atomic power unit for troops in the field".

In July 1957, the army council decided to order 10 of the mines and station them with forces in Germany.

One hurdle was that the mines might not work in winter if they became too cold, so the army proposed wrapping them in fibreglass pillows.

By October the design for Blue Peacock was nearly complete but reservations were being voiced.

The weapon was too large and heavy; the fallout hazard was unacceptable; pre-positioning a nuclear weapon in an allied country was politically flawed and the weapon could not be stored in peacetime near to where it would be needed in war.

In February 1958 the MoD's weapons policy committee decided that work on Blue Peacock should cease.

The only remaining prototype - minus any nuclear component - is now among the exhibits in the AWE's historical collection.

More on Orwell’s List


What The Age Won’t Print on “Defectors”

Excerpts from an article rejected by The Age

By Ian Syson

From William Lane and Billy Hughes to Peter Ryan and Keith Windschuttle, a legion made the move from the leftism of the heart to the rightism of the head. Albert Langer was first cab off this century’s rank.

As I have documented in Overland, ASIO archives reveal that one-time Labour Day flag bearer and latter-day Quadrant reargunner Peter Ryan moved in such a dramatic ideological direction that he shifted from being an object of state surveillance to one of its perpetrators. Ryan passed information about his colleagues at Melbourne University to ASIO.

Today we are being asked to trust this organization, and its track record of sheer stupidity coupled with the capacity to effect grotesque abuses of privacy, with the safekeeping of some of our basic freedoms.

Fiona Capp’s Writers Defiled, written a decade ago about the surveillance of Australian writers, revealed a wealth of material in the ASIO archives on writers of the heart like Frank Hardy and Dorothy Hewett. Much of this information is disturbing, erroneous and badly interpreted by the ASIO agents, though for researchers interested in the question of why so many intellectuals have moved progressively to the right, it is intriguing.

This most recent package was initially a disappointment, with no significant clues as to the future ideological moves of my quarry. But what did occur to me was a creeping sense of disquiet at the way McGuinness and Windschuttle were victims of appalling invasion. Comments on appearance, habits and morals that should have no place in an objective assessment say much about the assumptions of the assessors and the organization employing them.

The assessments are often ludicrous. In 1971, Windschuttle ‘gives the impression of being a violent revolutionary’ and is ‘well versed in revolutionary tactics’, an opinion with which very few of his peers would concur. In 1972 McGuinness is described nonsensically as ‘an anarchist by conviction but a communist in practice’. It is calculated that no more, no less than ‘75 % of his unpopularity’ with one group of people could be attributed to ‘his appearance’. McGuinness is understood to both loath and admire Castro, depending upon which document you read. In one memo a senior functionary has to remind an underling that ‘social’ and ‘socialist’ are not the same things!

Not surprisingly, it’s hard to find detailed written accounts of the political ‘defections’ of people like Windschuttle and McGuiness. When writing their memoirs or autobiographies, such figures focus only briefly on their leftist period or suggest that ‘really, we haven’t moved all that much; it’s the left that’s changed’. After all, it’s difficult for them to argue that ‘we once held beliefs that were particularly stupid’, without damaging their present credibility.

It is a sobering fact that despite all this denial and silence, the most complete record of their ideological twists and turns exists in the files of ASIO.

In light of the dossiers compiled by ASIO on Windschuttle and
McGuinness, I wonder what these neophytes of the right think about the ASIO Bill.

In a recent Quadrant editorial McGuinness suggested that the ‘worst that could ever be said about ASIO, then and now, is that it tends to be politically unsophisticated’. ASIO did however observe on 11 October 1972 that McGuinness ‘is an unreliable character whose ideological views would be swayed by the situation’. So far this one claim does appear to have been proven correct.

D (Departure) Notices

Obituary: Dick Hall, 1937-2003

With the death of John Iremonger in 2002 and Richard Victor Hall in 2003, Australian literary affairs prematurely lost two major figures, the former prominent in publishing, the latter better known as a writer and bon vivant. An unforgettable icon of Sydney, with an extraordinarily resonant voice and shock of wild, frizzy hair, Dick Hall was one of the first authors to visit the offices of Australian Archives to write a major Australian book. This was The Secret State: Australia’s Spy Industry (Cassell, 1978).

Despite recent contributions on that subject by historians, it remains a worthwhile and interesting volume. Scholarly types may have missed his 1998 book Black Armband Days, (Vintage) but this to me is a valuable book that contains an especially important essay on racism and the media. It is the one of the few places I know of where the lunatics of the Far Right are dumped on in book form.

Dick wrote widely on crime, espionage, politics, history and biography. Because Dick wrote for a living rather than when the muse took him, the quality of some of his books may have been a little uneven. His anthology Sydney is widely tipped to prove his most enduring, its introduction expressing his attachment to the harbour city as well as his wide general knowledge and intellectual generosity. The Rhodes Scholar Spy (1991) on Ian Milner was a quickie, but many (including Dick) would see as vindicated following the release of the Venona documents in 1996. According to an excellent obituary written by his friend Edmund Campion in the SMH on 25 March 2003, Dick’s biography of Gough Whitlam, for whom he worked as press secretary, remains ‘forthcoming’. I hope that this means it is in press.

A social democrat to the core and, with the likes of Ted Kennedy and Bob Scribner, a member of the Newman Society at Sydney University, Dick was unsympathetic to anything approaching Marxism. He would not have seen himself as a labour historian, though he co-edited Curtin’s off the record briefings to journalists. Way back in 1985 he addressed the Sydney branch of the Labour History Society on the Petrov Affair.

Dick’s most profound contribution was to the cultural life of this country. Campion’s obituary lists his achievements as encouraging the establishment of the NSW Premier’s Literary Awards, foundation membership of the Australia
Council’s Literature Board and membership of the State Library Council at a particularly crucial time.

A great networker, Dick was always good company and an enthusiastic tippler. Some of this city’s best restaurants are no doubt still lamenting his loss. The last time I saw him was in the State Library’s coffee shop a year or more ago. I was researching the career of Stan Taylor, a former president of the New South Wales Arbitration Commission. Dick immediately reeled off anecdotes about Stan, (not all of them entirely reliable) and complained about how it was impossible to get a drink in the State Library without paying for an expensive meal. Dick lived life to the full. According to Campion, the women in his life were ‘attentive to his exigencies’. Apart from twenty more years, what more can you ask for?  

Andrew Moore

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Tasnor Ivan (Tas) Bull 1932-2003


(Obit by Rowan Cahill in The Hummer, vol. 3, no. 10, 2003.)

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According to Richard Erlich in the Asia Times, Poshepny waged secret wars against communism in Indonesia, Tibet and Laos and twice won the CIA Star – its highest award. Often compared to Marlon Brando’s Colonel Kurtz in Apocalypse Now, he dropped human heads from the air on communists and stuck heads on spikes. He once sent a bag of human ears to the US Embassy in Vientiane to prove his guerrillas were killing communists. (The Australian 12/13 July 2003).

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