

AUSTRALIA IN THE WORLD OF TODAY—PROBLEMS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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THE world is changing so fast, not least for Australia, that an understanding of international developments in general and of Australian foreign policy in particular has become a necessity rather than a luxury even for the citizen whose work is not directly related to these fields of study or action. It is not easy, however, for him to form sound opinions on governmental policy and methods chosen to implement it unless he can see both in historical perspective. The purpose of this address is to make a limited contribution to this end.

It is sufficient for my purposes tonight to begin the story with the Munich Agreement 1938. I have examined in detail elsewhere¹ the justification or otherwise of Neville Chamberlain's policy at that time, the policy of the Australian Government, and its conception of the role of Australia in the international field. Here it is necessary to repeat only the governmental assumptions as to policy and method as revealed mainly in the speech of the Attorney-General, Mr. Menzies, during the debate on the Munich Agreement which took place in the House of Representatives at Canberra on 5th October, 1938.² They can be summarized as follows :

- (1) The British Commonwealth should speak with one voice—only so could its policy have adequate and maximum effect.
- (2) The Dominions had the right to be consulted by Great Britain in matters affecting their vital interests. Consultation implied the supply of information in advance of crises, in time for Dominion views to be considered before crucial decisions were taken by the mother country.
- (3) Australia was content to leave to Great Britain the actual handling of foreign affairs, and to express her own views overseas to Great Britain only.
- (4) Unlike Canada and South Africa (which at an early stage after the Balfour Declaration of 1926 exercised their right to establish Diplomatic Missions in foreign countries) Australian needs were met by the establishment merely of a small but separate Department of External Affairs staffed by career officers with University training. This Department, assisted by the Australian High Commissioner in London, the Senior Australian External

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¹ "Australia and the Munich Agreement", *Australian Outlook*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (April, 1963).

² *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 157, pp. 388 *et seq.*

Affairs Officer, London, the Australian Counsellor in the British Embassy, Washington,³ and a number of Trade Commissioners posted overseas,⁴ aided the Government in formulating suggestions or comments on foreign policy for communication to the British Government.

In these circumstances, when Australia had *no* diplomatic missions in Berlin, Moscow, Paris, Tokyo or Washington, the dominant source of Australian confidential information about the pressure of the Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia for self-determination was the British Government. It is not a matter for surprise, therefore, that Australian policy in relation to the crisis which Hitler provoked, faithfully reflected British policy. Lest it be thought that any alternative Australian Government, had it been in power at the time, would have pursued a more sympathetic policy towards Czechoslovakia or a stronger policy towards Hitler, I quote the following extracts from the speech of Mr. Curtin, Leader of the Labour Party Opposition, during the Munich Agreement debate on 5th October, 1938 :

“ . . . the interests of Australia can best be served by giving paramount consideration to the safety of our own people and the safety of our own soil. The defence of this nation is best served by a policy of national self-reliance rather than one which embroils us in the perennial disputes of Europe . . . I say that the Labour Party in Australia is opposed in principle and in practice to Australians being recruited as soldiers in the battle-fields of Europe . . . We believe that the best service which Australia can render to the British Empire is to attend to its own business, to make certain that we manage Australia effectively, so that we shall have the necessary population and be able to rely upon ourselves in the event of an emergency.”⁵

The Second World War soon demonstrated the inadequacy of the assumptions upon which the Australian Government acted at the time of Munich, and soon forced a speedy change in policy and methods. In March, 1940, Mr. R. G. Casey (as he then was) surrendered his Cabinet portfolio and became the first Australian Head of a Diplomatic Mission to a foreign country—the United States. During the same year Sir John Latham was appointed Australian Minister to Japan; while in 1941 Sir Frederic Eggleston took up the new post of Australian Minister at Chungking. During the early stages of Australian diplomatic activity every effort was made to maintain the so-called “ diplomatic unity of the British Commonwealth ”. Lord Casey has revealed recently in his memoirs⁶ that he saw the British Ambassador at Washington, Lord Lothian, “ practically every day ”; that he had “ no fewer than sixty-seven discussions ” with Lothian’s successor, Lord Halifax, during the further year Mr. Casey spent in Washington after the arrival of Lord Halifax; and that he and the British Ambassador frequently had joint interviews with the American Secretary of

³ R. G. Casey, *Friends and Neighbours* (Sydney, 1954), p. 31.

⁴ *Commonwealth Year Book* No. 48 (1962), p. 476.

⁵ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 157, pp. 393–5.

⁶ R. G. Casey, *Personal Experience 1939–46*, p. 43 and p. 53.

State. It was not long, however, before the growing divergence of immediate British and Australian interests stretched the "diplomatic unity of the Commonwealth" almost beyond recognition.

Even before the loss of Singapore, the new Australian Prime Minister, Mr. Curtin, had made his famous statement of 27th December, 1941, in a newspaper article:

"The Australian Government . . . regards the Pacific struggle as primarily one in which the United States and Australia must have the fullest say in the direction of the democracies' fighting plan. Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom. We know the problems that the United Kingdom faces . . . But we know, too, that Australia can go and Britain can still hold on . . ."⁷

Singapore fell on 15th February, 1942, and Darwin was bombed on 19th February. On 17th February, Curtin had telegraphed Churchill requesting the return to Australia of the three Australian Divisions then in the Middle East. Later in the same month there occurred that unhappy exchange of telegrams between Churchill and Curtin, disclosing deep-seated and emotional differences of view, on the subject of the proposed diversion to Burma of the Australian 7th Division, then *en route* to Australia. The relationships between the two Prime Ministers were further exacerbated by the appointment by Churchill of Casey as British Minister of State in the Middle East. Before Casey's departure from Washington in April, 1942, the new Minister for External Affairs, Dr. Evatt, arrived in the United States to press for greater Australian participation in strategic war decisions, including the allocation of munitions of war. President Roosevelt, on Harry Hopkins' advice,⁸ agreed to the establishment in Washington of a Pacific War Council, which gave the representative of Australia and of each other Member country regular access to the President of the United States and thus the opportunity to influence him. The Council, however, was advisory only, without power to take decisions determining the policy of the combined British-American Chiefs of Staff. Only after Dr. Evatt reached London during the same overseas visit did he learn, to his chagrin, of prior British-American agreement on a policy of "Beat-Hitler-First"⁹—which involved, of course, the direction of maximum resources to the campaign in Europe and North Africa and the fighting of a "holding-war" in the Pacific.

It was not until the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway had relieved Australia of the threat and fear of direct Japanese attack that the tension between Canberra and London eased, and Dr. Evatt began to concentrate his energies on the post-war settlements and the part Australia should play in them. In November, 1943, however, Roosevelt, Churchill and Chiang-kai-shek agreed at the Cairo Conference upon the post-war disposition of Manchuria, Formosa and other territories in the broad Pacific

⁷ Quoted in Hartley Grattan, *The United States and the Southwest Pacific*, p. 180.

⁸ See Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins* (New York, 1948), p. 515.

⁹ See Dudley McCarthy, *Australia in the War of 1939-45*, Vol. V, pp. 188.

area, without any prior consultation between Great Britain and the Dominions. Australia and New Zealand reacted by signing the Anzac Pact of 21st January, 1944, in which the two countries affirmed the necessity for securing their assent to "the interim administration and ultimate disposal of enemy territories in the Pacific", and to any "change in the sovereignty or system of control of any of the islands of the Pacific". The Pact also affirmed principles on trusteeship for colonial territories which were unlikely to please Great Britain at the time, and principles about military bases on their respective territories which were likely to give offence to the United States. Subsequently, the Anzac partners agreed in November, 1944, upon broad principles to be pursued at the United Nations Charter Conference to be held during the following year in San Francisco, where both the New Zealand Prime Minister and the Australian Minister for External Affairs, but especially Dr. Evatt, pursued substantially independent policies from that of the United Kingdom—though there had, of course, been close consultation on the subject of the Charter between Commonwealth countries in London prior to the opening of the San Francisco Conference.

While the Labour Party was still in power, Australia succeeded, by heavy pressure, in obtaining Great-Power assent to separate representation at the ceremony when Japan surrendered; it secured and exercised a degree of "Commonwealth" representation on behalf of Great Britain, New Zealand, India and Australia on the Allied Council for Japan—set up to perform the impossible task of "advising" General MacArthur on the execution of "occupation" policy in Japan—which policy was theoretically determined in Washington by the Far Eastern Commission, of which Australia was a member; obtained agreement to the appointment of an Australian Judge as President of the Allied War Crimes Tribunal in Tokyo; and it appointed an Australian general as Head of the Commonwealth component of the Allied Occupation Forces in Japan.

If one looks at the assumptions underlying Australian Foreign Policy at the time when the Labour Government was rejected by the electorate in December, 1949, the changes since 1938 are striking. In saying this one must be cautious of assuming that many of these changes would not have been made by a Liberal-Country Party coalition if it had been in power at the relevant times, whatever differences there might have been in emphasis, method or tone. Hard facts respect no political parties, while party platforms may have to be adapted to the pursuit of vital Australian interests. The changes may be summarized as follows:

- (1) The Department of External Affairs had been greatly expanded, and diplomatic representation in foreign countries greatly increased—in Russia, France, at the United Nations and elsewhere. This increased greatly the range of confidential and public information available to the Australian Government. No less important, the information was sent by Australian citizens who kept Australian interests predominantly in mind. In other words, it was no longer assumed that information through London was sufficient.

- (2) Public statements on important issues made clear to the world at large certain differences of view or judgment between Australia and Great Britain. The old faith in the "diplomatic unity of the Commonwealth" burned far less brightly.
- (3) Australian views on foreign policy were expressed, not merely to London, but direct to foreign powers, either through Australian diplomatic missions in foreign countries, or their representatives in Australia, or through the United Nations. Thus, at the San Francisco Conference 1945, the Australian Minister for External Affairs, Dr. Evatt, aspired to be and in large degree was the leader of the so-called Small and Middle powers, whose views often differed from those of the Great Powers, including Great Britain.

In short, though still in very close consultation with London, Australia in 1949 was pursuing a substantially independent foreign policy.

The defeat of the Chifley Labour Government did not result in such drastic changes in foreign policy as some might have expected from the criticism of Labour policy by the Opposition parties while still in Opposition. This, of course, is not surprising, as any Opposition tends to oppose, while any party actually in power finds that the responsibilities of office restrict the range of practicable policy. Thus, the strong support given by Mr. Spender (as he then was) and by Mr. Casey, as Ministers for External Affairs, to the creation and carrying out of the Colombo Plan did not differ in principle from Dr. Evatt's statement as early as 1943 that it might become necessary for Governments to "accept obligations of an international character which, in the past, have normally been regarded as matters of domestic concern only, and to accept responsibility for standards of living and for economic development in countries beyond our border".¹⁰ That the statement was not mere lip-service to a vague ideal is proven by Dr. Evatt's energetic support, during the San Francisco Conference 1945, for increased power and status for the Economic and Social Council, and for the present terms of Article 55 of the Charter, which enjoins the United Nations to promote, *inter alia*, "higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development". Again, although Mr. Menzies as Leader of the Opposition had criticized the Labour Government's handling of the dispute between Holland and Indonesia regarding the latter's claim for independence, the Menzies Government in office accepted as a *fait accompli* the existence of independent Indonesia and endeavoured to maintain friendly relations with that country, while opposing Indonesia's claim to Dutch New Guinea—as did also, of course, the Labour Party when out of office.

The chief difference between the Chifley-Curtin Governments and the Menzies Government was the different emphasis placed on the position of the United Nations in the field of foreign policy. Dr. Evatt was "committed" to the United Nations and believed that its machinery should be used to the maximum possible extent. It was his view, in particular, that in the event of threats to the peace or actual breaches

¹⁰ See *Current Notes* (Department of External Affairs), Vol. 14 (1943), pp. 147-8.

of the peace, the United Nations should consider, investigate the facts, conciliate where practicable, and in any case bring to bear the pressure of world opinion in reducing tension as a step towards the solution of problems. To Mr. Menzies and his Ministers for External Affairs, reference of an issue to the United Nations was not a policy in itself: an Australian Government, in their opinion, had to keep clearly in mind the probable results, positive or negative, of such a reference, and what policy it would advocate when the matter was considered by the United Nations. They were particularly conscious of the weakness of the United Nations in the field of security. The Russian veto had so stultified decisions by the Security Council and the operation of the Military Staff Committee (responsible, under the Charter (Art. 47), for the "strategic direction" of armed forces supposedly available to the Security Council in accordance with national agreements to be made—but never in fact made—under Art. 43) that, in the view of the Menzies Government, security arrangements between groups of like-minded States under Arts. 51 to 54 of the Charter were not only desirable but essential. Hence its strong approval of the establishment of NATO to resist Communist aggression or pressure in Europe, and hence also the keen initiative of successive Ministers for External Affairs in the Liberal-Country Party Government in the creation of ANZUS and SEATO.

The ANZUS Treaty, which came into force on 29th April, 1952, is of central importance in post-war and current Australian foreign policy. It is significant that it was entered into by a Government whose Prime Minister has been proud to describe himself as "a Commonwealth man" and Australians as "All the Queen's men". Yet the United Kingdom is not a party to the agreement—although no Australian Government would have wished to see her excluded. Australia, however, was not prepared to reject the opportunity of negotiating a security treaty with the United States by insisting that she would sign no such treaty unless Great Britain was also a party.¹¹ (Of course, Great Britain was a member of NATO, from which Australia was "excluded".) The United States was a foreign country which had proved its friendship in no uncertain terms during the Second World War, and which disposed of the greatest military power in the Pacific. Australia feared that the Japanese Peace Treaty, many aspects of which she had opposed—especially the permitted rearmament of Japan—might facilitate the resurgence of Japanese militarism which in the recent past had put Australian territory in direct jeopardy; she also feared the expansion of Communist China; and she was uneasy about the long-term effects of ebullient Asian nationalism. Opportunities for military alliances like ANZUS, between one Great Power and two Small Powers, are rare and, if lost, may well never recur. The ANZUS Treaty became negotiable only against the background firstly, that the United States desired at least Australian acquiescence in the Japanese Peace Treaty, and, secondly, that the early assistance given by the Royal Australian Air Force (77 Squadron)—followed later by Australian ground forces and naval co-operation—to Americans fighting what was in the early stages a

¹¹ See Dean E. McHenry and Richard N. Rosecrance, *International Organisation*, Vol. 12 (1958), pp. 320-9.

desperate battle in Korea created a most favourable political climate for Australia in the United States. For years Australia had toyed with the notion of some kind of Pacific Pact. Mr. Lyons took soundings in Washington in 1937, and Dr. Evatt pursued the idea in various ways; but it was not until 1951 that the Pact, more restricted as to parties than originally conceived, became a diplomatic possibility and was promptly and successfully pursued by Mr. Percy Spender, the Minister for External Affairs, as he then was.

Oddly enough, few acts of the Menzies Government have been so criticized, or at least so systematically written down, as the negotiation and ratification of the ANZUS Treaty. In Parliament or out of Parliament it has been described as unnecessary, weak, diluted, unjustified, anti-British, more onerous to Australia in its obligations than to the United States. These criticisms I regard as mistaken or as exaggerated distortions, and I shall shortly be examining them in detail elsewhere.¹² Tonight there is time to deal only with a few criticisms, sometimes in rather general terms.

The debate in the House of Representatives which was opened by Mr. Casey on 21st February, 1952,¹³ makes painful reading today. It was bedevilled by the Manus Island controversy. Dr. Evatt, as Leader of the Opposition, accepted the Treaty on behalf of the Labour Party, while expressing his regret for what he regarded as the "price" which Australia had paid for it, viz., acceptance of a "soft" Japanese Peace Treaty. Most of his speech, however, was directed to justifying his own policy, while Minister for External Affairs, in rejecting an informal American approach for post-war rights in the base which the United States had constructed at Manus unless and until the United States indicated its readiness to grant reciprocal rights to Australia to use American bases, as part of an overall defence arrangement for the region of the Western Pacific. Dr. Evatt also charged that a Sydney newspaper article criticizing his policy on Manus must have been based on information only available in official files. Mr. Casey denied the charge. His efforts to eliminate this "red herring" from the debate were not successful, and the ghost of Manus haunted the speeches of many members of Parliament on both sides of the House. The most charitable interpretation of such Opposition statements as "it (the Anzus Treaty) does not give us anything that we have not already got"¹⁴ is that the normal desire of any Opposition to minimize achievements by any Government was greatly strengthened by the association of the ANZUS Treaty with the Japanese Peace Treaty and by irritation due to suspicion that the Government was responsible for "leaking" to the Press confidential information with a view to discrediting Dr. Evatt and the Labour Party.

This explanation, however, cannot explain the severe criticisms levelled against ANZUS by non-Parliamentary critics such as Professor MacMahon Ball,¹⁵ Mr. David

¹² "Australia's Defence Policy 1951-1963, Major International Aspects", published by the Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, A.N.U.

¹³ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 216 (1952), pp. 217 *et seq.*

¹⁴ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 216, p. 604 (Mr. Haylen).

¹⁵ *Australian Outlook*, Vol. 5 (1951), pp. 138 *et seq.*

Sissons¹⁶ and Dr. John Burton.¹⁷ This opposition seems to be based on one or other of two fears ; firstly, that by signing an alliance with the United States, close relations with non-aligned Asian countries in general and India in particular might be made more difficult, and, secondly, that Australia was likely to be dragged by "wild" Americans into wars arising from the pursuit of policies (e.g., support for the Nationalist Chinese Government on and around Formosa) with which Australia should disagree. Such fears are understandable though, in my opinion, exaggerated. The probable governmental answer to the first is best given by the American authority on Australia, Mr. Hartley Grattan, in the following words¹⁸ :

"The Australians were keenly concerned to develop and maintain the best possible relations with all the countries of South and Southeast Asia ; they did not want to do anything offensive to them. They carefully studied the currents of opinion in these countries, especially the sensitivities about outside interference in Asian affairs founded in their reaction to colonialism . . . Yet while the Australians sought good relations with the Asian states, they did not feel that this meant that they must conform their own policies to Asian policies . . . They conceived themselves as a nation with a profound and highly sympathetic interest in and concern for the Asian states and their future, but not as a state destined from motives of self-preservation to be assimilated to the emerging Asian political system . . . Australia they thought of as a nation which was and would remain by force of geography a close neighbour of Asia, but nevertheless to be maintained as a state of Europeo-American social and cultural character. Its policies should, by preference, be sympathetic to the Asian states in every respect in which this was possible, but if Australian interests dictated support of policies the Asians were little likely to regard with any enthusiasm as policies they themselves could adopt, the plunge had to be made . . ."

As to the second fear, insufficient weight was given, I suggest, to three considerations. The Anzus Treaty does not oblige the parties to declare war immediately there is an armed attack upon one of them¹⁹ ; although Australian influence is unlikely to determine American policy when vital American interests are thought to be involved, the influence of a Treaty-partner is at least likely to be *more* effective than the influence of a country which is not an ally ; it could be argued that, if the United States became involved in major war in the Pacific area Australian governments would decide that Australian vital interests compelled Australian involvement even if no ANZUS Treaty existed. In any event, Australian obligations under ANZUS represent the price paid for the American obligation under the same Treaty to defend Australia and its territories against armed attack *from any quarter*. Under the SEATO Treaty, the American obligation is limited to cases of Communist aggression. No such limitation applies to the ANZUS Treaty.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 6 (1952), pp. 21-2.

¹⁷ *The Alternative* (Sydney), 1954, pp. 74-6.

¹⁸ Hartley Grattan, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

¹⁹ See *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 216, Casey at p. 218.

A great deal of confusion has arisen from comparison of the language of NATO with the language of ANZUS, and the conclusion is often drawn that ANZUS is weaker than NATO, thus indicating that the United States is less interested in the Pacific than in the Atlantic and Europe. In my opinion no such conclusion is justified. It is true that Art. V of NATO contains the psychologically comforting phrase that "an armed attack against one or more" of the parties is to be considered "an attack against them all", whereas ANZUS states merely in Art. IV that "Each party recognises that an armed attack . . . on any of the Parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes . . ." But the important thing is not what an armed attack is considered to be, but what the parties are bound to do if and when such an attack occurs. Under NATO each party is bound merely to take "such action as *it* deems necessary". Indeed, neither NATO nor ANZUS obliges the parties, under the terms of the treaties themselves as distinct from any agreements subsequently made under them, to any specific course of action. Neither, therefore, is weaker—or stronger—than the other. The form of words chosen for ANZUS and subsequently for SEATO was designed, not to indicate less American interest in one geographical area than in another, but to avoid further debate in Congress of the kind which occurred when the NATO Treaty was under consideration. At that time some Congressmen feared that the NATO form of words "enlarged the responsibility and authority of the President as against that of Congress".²⁰

The historical background summarized above will, I hope, serve to illustrate one of the basic dilemmas of Australian Foreign Policy. Professor F. L. W. Wood, now of New Zealand, has called this "The Anzac Dilemma".²¹ How is Australia (or New Zealand) to reconcile membership of the Commonwealth and loyalty to Great Britain, on the one hand, with dependence, on the other hand, upon American rather than British power in the Pacific since World War II? "It is a striking fact", he has written, "that during the past war New Zealand and Australia quietly acknowledged that they were within the American field and the responsibility of the United States fleet. This involved the tacit repudiation of the most basic axiom of our thinking, or more accurately perhaps of our feeling, in matters of defence and physical security."²²

We have seen how a Labour Party Government, in emergency, looked publicly to the United States "free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom"; and how a Liberal-Country Party Government, after the war, entered into a military alliance with the United States although Great Britain was not a party to the Treaty. Do not these two significant illustrations make it highly probable that any Australian Government of the foreseeable future will follow its own vital interests, even where these conflict with British interests, despite the sympathetic and emotional ties of Australians to the British people?

²⁰ J. F. Dulles, "Security in the Pacific", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 30, No. 2, January, 1952, pp. 174 *et seq.*

²¹ *International Affairs*, Vol. 29 (1953), pp. 184 *et seq.*

²² *Ibid.*

It is surprising, however, that Australians so far have given little sign of accepting the logical converse of this point of view by recognizing Great Britain's right to resolve her own dilemmas in a similar way. The best current illustration of this is Australian reaction to the British decision to apply, subject to certain safeguards, for admission to membership of the European Economic Community. The British Government decided that its vital political and economic interests required that Britain should move closer towards Europe, even at some cost to Commonwealth (including Australian) interests. I suggest that Australia cannot reasonably have it both ways. She cannot both override important British interests in the field of defence, such as Great Britain's implied desire to be a member of ANZUS, and also object to action by Great Britain designed to protect *British* vital political and economic interests. The Australian Government, of course, did not claim a right of veto upon the British decision ; but every Australian official statement warned directly or indirectly of the dangers to the Commonwealth if Britain entered the Common Market and claimed that an essential condition precedent was protection of Australian economic interests in Britain and in Europe. To fight to protect the legitimate interests of one's own country is one thing ; it is another thing to resent British action in this direction because of a vague feeling among many Australians that " Mother was letting the Commonwealth (or Australia) down " in following her own interests. But surely if Australia is grown up enough to enter into separate military alliances with foreign powers she must accept the responsibilities of adulthood in other directions as well. What may be more open to legitimate criticism by Australians is the questionable frankness of statements by British political leaders implying that Britain did not have to choose between Europe and the Commonwealth in seeking membership of the Common Market, if only because the application would not be proceeded with unless vital Commonwealth interests were safeguarded. The phrase " vital interests " is, of course, ambiguous ; in any event the British Government, not the Australian Government, would make the decision as to what were Australian vital interests. Moreover, there can be no doubt of the genuineness of Mr. Menzies' fears regarding the effects upon the Commonwealth, if Britain joined the European Economic Community, should the movement towards the political integration of that Community eventually result, for instance, in the creation of a European Federation.

The historical outline sketched tonight also discloses a second basic dilemma which those who decide Australian foreign policy must face. This can be described as Australia's " Asian Dilemma ". How can Australia at one and the same time both increase her security from possible pressure by Asian countries and also build up goodwill in Asia towards Australia which might diminish the likelihood of such pressure ever being exerted ?

It is obviously to the interest of Australians, a people of European origin and cultural tradition living in a country geographically placed just below the southern rim of Asia, to develop the most friendly relations with the Asian peoples to her north and north-west ; but it is also to her interest not to be submerged by these neighbours, politically, in her economics, or culturally. In search of physical security,

Australia has so far found it necessary to depend for the most part on her "great and powerful friends", Great Britain and the United States—although, of course, membership of SEATO makes her also the military ally of three Asian countries, Thailand, the Philippines and Pakistan. Yet membership of SEATO has undoubtedly increased the difficulty of drawing closer ties of friendship with a number of important Asian countries, especially India, who pursue a policy of "non-alignment". Should then Australia denounce her military alliances, adopt a neutralist policy, proclaim herself an "Asian" country, and, in the extreme case, open her doors to Asian immigration? Should she proclaim her adherence to Panch Shila—the Five Principles of mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, peaceful co-existence—and trust that Asian countries which have accepted these principles in theory will in practice act in accordance with them? It is clear that the Menzies Government which has been in power since 1949 has never been prepared to prefer the uncertainties of Asian goodwill to the comparative certainties of concrete military alliances.

This does not mean, of course, that the alternative policies of seeking Asian friendliness and entering into military alliances are necessarily mutually exclusive. Indeed, all Australian Governments in the post-war period have pursued both policies at one and the same time, putting Japan on one side as a special case during the early post-war years. Thus, Mr. Casey, after his first "goodwill" visit to Asia in 1951, shortly after taking over the portfolio of External Affairs, reported as follows :

" If my trip has taught me one lesson more than another it is that Australia must show a sympathetic interest in all the problems of Asia—cultural, economic political and, to some extent, even military problems . . . We must create and maintain friendly relations with Asia. Friendship will not come automatically. We must make a positive effort to understand Asia and to help solve the very real problems which the countries of Asia are facing . . ." ²³

Mr. Casey was a convinced supporter of the Colombo Plan and believed in the "two-way" value of the thousands of Asian students who came to Australia both under its provisions and for private, non-official study. On his recommendation, the Government greatly extended its diplomatic representation in South and South-East Asia despite severe limitations of trained personnel and of finance. He himself assiduously visited Asian countries from Japan and Korea in the North-east to Pakistan and Ceylon in the West, and made direct personal contacts in the area unique in range for the foreign minister of a "Western" country. Whatever the shortcomings of Australian foreign policy during the post-war period, it cannot justifiably be charged that Australian Ministers for External Affairs or their official advisers failed to devote either time or energy to the problems arising from the Asian area ; indeed, those visiting or posted in Asian countries with tropical climates

²³ Casey, *Current Notes*, Vol. 22 (1951), pp. 442 *et seq.*

deserve praise for their sympathetic interest and constant effort, often at considerable cost to their health.

But contact at the political and official levels does not necessarily imply cultural understanding. In this field, I suggest, the Australian Universities have a major opportunity and a major responsibility. Political leaders and governmental advisers are always working against time: they have a dead-line, usually in the short-term. Their work needs to be supplemented and facilitated by those who have more time to consider long-term problems against the broad, historical background. The establishment of Chairs or Lectureships in Asian Languages and various aspects of Oriental studies is a substantial step towards better Australian understanding of the traditional culture of Asia and of their diversity. Australian public opinion also can benefit greatly from addresses such as "Asia—The Cultural Background", delivered by Mr. J. D. Frodsham at the annual conference of the Australian Institute of Political Science held in Canberra in January, 1961, which assists the less-initiated to appreciate the significant differences between traditional Indian, Chinese and Japanese culture. In recent years, too, there has been a noticeable increase in published studies of current relations between, for instance, Australia and India, and between Australia and Indonesia. Those who determine foreign policy are being provided with a more solid foundation for their judgments, while adaptation of long-established policies becomes more practicable because public opinion, being better informed, is somewhat readier to accept and support necessary changes.

Australian efforts during the post-war period to create friendly relations with Asian neighbours have, I believe, had some effect; at the same time, I think we would be unwise to exaggerate their significance. The Asian image of Australia is still, in the main, the image of a vast country sparsely inhabited by "White Australians" whose average standard of living is high and whose policy it is to deny to Asians the right of entry for permanent residence. Many Asian political leaders know that Australia is not as fertile as it looks on the map, admit in principle the right of independent nations to control the composition of their populations—as is done, of course, by Asian countries themselves—realize that migration is no solution to the exploding population problems of countries like China or India, and are even aware that there are a few exceptions to the general Australian rule that Asians may not enter for permanent residence. In general, however, there is resentment at what is regarded as the continuing implication that the colour of one's skin invites discrimination. No Australian diplomat who has served in any Asian country can be unaware of the increased difficulty he experiences in trying to build up goodwill towards Australia because of our immigration policy.

As it is sometimes denied that Asians do in fact resent this policy, I quote from a leading article in the *Eastern Economist*, published on 25th August, 1950, which states bluntly that the "White-Australia" policy "is what separates Australia from South-East Asia, to which both geographically and historically it now belongs". "It is certain", the journal continues, "that in time South East Asia will call it (the policy) in question. Unless Australia revises her immigration policy in part—

removing the affront against Asiatics that it contains—she will never receive the co-operation of South East Asia, which can build a buttress against Communism over this area . . . whether under democratic or Communist leadership Asia will not acquiesce indefinitely in the continuance of the White Australia policy.” The *Eastern Economist* did not advocate for Asians the right to unrestricted migration into Australia, alleging rather that Asian countries would be content with restricted entry under a quota or other system designed to protect the standard of living in Australia.

My purpose tonight in raising this question is to underline its significance for Asian-Australian relations rather than to propose any particular solution. I do not myself believe in an “open-door” policy permitting all Asians who wish to, to come to Australia—if only because I do not believe that migration to any number of countries, including Australia, is the answer to the Asian population problem. Further, I would not advocate any migration policy the probable result of which could be shown to be introduction into Australia of problems comparable to those in South Africa, or even in Ceylon, Fiji or Malaya. Nor do I take it for granted that introduction by an Australian Government of, say, a quota system for Asian migrants would automatically result in a surge of goodwill towards Australians by Asian peoples. Nevertheless, it is my opinion that the issue of admission of Asians to Australia for permanent residence requires serious and courageous consideration with a view to trying to devise some reasonably flexible scheme of limited entry which will permit Australia to *publicize in Asia* the fact that *some* Asians at least qualify for permanent residence in Australia as *Asians*.

Australians are often puzzled by the so-called “double-standards” which tend to be applied by Afro-Asian countries in two different directions. Many of these countries seem much readier to criticize action by Western Governments—such as British and French intervention at the time of the Suez crisis, than action by Communist Governments—such as the ruthless suppression of dissident elements in Hungary. Further, whereas the use of force by France and Britain during the Suez crisis was roundly condemned, the use of force by India in overrunning Goa, and the threat and partial use of force by Indonesia as part of its policy of “confrontation” of Holland over West New Guinea was glossed over if not positively approved. Australia, too, is subjected to constant criticism for her administration of her trust territory of New Guinea, on the ground that the inhabitants are not being prepared for self-government quickly enough. Is similar criticism likely to be made of Indonesia should she fail to fulfil, in due course, her undertaking to grant to the Papuans in West New Guinea an impartial plebiscite on the issue of “self-determination”?

In these circumstances it is not surprising if citizens of Western countries, including Australia, begin to ask whether countries not members of the Afro-Asian group are to be denied rights which the members of this group claim for themselves. In short, are rights in future still to be regarded as “human rights”, applicable to all members of the human race, including those whose skin is white, or are they to be

limited in practice only to Afro-Asian peoples? In my view Australians are entitled to ask this question—but only, I suggest, if we ourselves are prepared to accept the principle that those whose skin is *not* white are also classified as human beings with the human rights we claim for ourselves. Applying this test in the field of immigration to Australia, there is no doubt that our present policy does discriminate against those human beings whose skin does not happen to be white. There are many justifiable reasons for this. To forgo all discrimination would be to open the doors to chaos and to adopt a policy which Asian countries themselves frequently reject. Substantial discrimination or, to use a better word, control—is, I believe, essential. It is a question rather of publicly accepting certain principles: that the colour of one's skin is a test neither of intelligence nor character, that some restricted degree of racial admixture could *benefit* Australia, and that we are prepared to adopt some practical method of permitting controlled numbers of selected "non-white" peoples to enter Australia for permanent residence. To those who claim that racial admixture inevitably brings evil or unfortunate consequences I quote merely one example to the contrary. Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837), Russia's greatest poet and a literary figure of world eminence, was descended on his mother's side from an Abyssinian princeling.

To sum up, few will contest the view that, in the changed and changing world of today, Australians have very serious problems to face in the international field, requiring her, as a small but adult nation, to rely upon herself to a greater degree than in the past and to accept wider responsibilities. As a people, we have undoubted rights which we are entitled to do our utmost to preserve. But our chances of preserving them will depend, I suggest, to an important degree upon our readiness to understand the problems of other countries, the susceptibilities of their peoples, and their insistence that they too, as human beings, also demand the rights we claim for ourselves.