Brave New World

Dr H.V. Evatt and Australian foreign policy

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For an Australian politician who never became prime minister, Dr Herbert Vere Evatt casts a bulky shadow over the country's political history, his contribution outweighing that of most, if not all, of the men who did become prime minister. It is Evatt who is credited by many diplomatic historians with being the creator of an independent Australian foreign policy; it was Evatt who became the leading spokesman for the small powers at the San Francisco conference that established the United Nations and who later became president of the United Nations; it was Evatt who steered Australia's foreign policy safely through the difficult postwar years when decolonisation presented so many challenges to the old, comforting certainties of Australia's position within the British Empire; and it was Evatt who, as Opposition Leader, was most responsible for preventing the cold hand of McCarthyism from gaining a grip on Australian political life by ensuring the defeat of the referendum in 1951 that sought to ban the Communist Party.

Evatt's place in history would have been assured by any one of these contributions to Australian political life. But such was his restless energy that he also carved out leading positions for himself, firstly in the field of law, where he was a Justice of the High Court and later Chief Justice of the New South Wales Supreme Court, and wrote erudite and lasting judgments on cases that came before him while also writing his landmark work on constitutional practice, *The King and his Dominion Governors* (1936). In the discipline of history, his books *Rum Rebellion* (1938), *Injustice within the Law* (1937) and *Australian Labour Leader* (1940) provided contributions to the craft that some professors of history have not bettered in a life's work.

For all his contributions across so many fields, Evatt's life was seldom free of controversy. Some of this controversy resulted from the liberal causes that he adopted, from his determined championing of modern art in the startled faces of the traditionalists to his principled defence of the Communist Party. But some of the controversy arose
from his ambitious and awkward personality that set so many people on edge, to the point that they doubted his motives, his trustworthiness, his political acumen and sometimes even his sanity.

It was in order to throw more light on this controversial figure that I organised a conference at Bond University in 1990 that would bring together academics from a range of disciplines who could discuss Evatt's multifarious contribution to Australian national life. To my surprise, the conference itself became a short-lived controversy when several academics objected to it being held and even proposed that it be boycotted and a black ban imposed on anyone daring to attend it. Evatt would have been amused. As it happened, the conference went ahead in the face of these antics and was perhaps even more successful because of them. Dr Evatt's daughter and son-in-law were special guests while at the conference dinner Justice Elizabeth Evatt kindly provided at short notice a witty and moving reminiscence of her uncle.

Although the papers at the conference ranged over Evatt's life and his many activities, this collection from the conference concentrates on one aspect only, examining his considerable contribution to the development of Australian foreign policy. As Minister for External Affairs during those tumultuous eight years from 1941–49, Evatt had to cope with a world being convulsed by a war which threatened the very survival of Australia and then, in the postwar world, he had to face the challenges of a world changed beyond recognition by the machinations of the Cold War and the liberating effects of decolonisation. Hence the title, Brave New World.
Notes on Contributors

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John Burton joined the Department of External Affairs in 1941. He quickly became adviser to Dr H.V. Evatt, accompanying him to the San Francisco conference of 1945, and was later Permanent Head of the department from 1947 to 1950. Between 1963 and 1978 he taught international relations at University College, London, where he established the Centre for the Analysis of Conflict. He was later Distinguished Visiting Professor at George Mason University in Virginia. He has published widely on international relations and conflict resolution.

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In the television series, “The True Believers”, the producers portrayed Herbert Vere Evatt as a person whom they clearly did not understand, creating a superficial character who was embarrassingly unreal and unconvincing. This is not a criticism of the producers, or indeed of the records that influenced them, since it is unlikely that even the most conscientious empirical research would have revealed the mystery of this seemingly unpredictable person. Without some deeper understanding of him, Evatt was and will remain the strange and unexplained character depicted in “The True Believers”.

Evatt’s times were ones of unusual philosophical doubt. They were times of extreme ideologies, with no objective reference points by which to assess them. Bigotry was widespread in public political life, and also in clandestine private and official agencies which, with the arrogance of ignorance, set out to save democracy from itself. There were, indeed, “true believers”, but Evatt was not one of them. He was caught in a political environment, domestic and international, that intuitively, intellectually and emotionally was unacceptable to him. But there was no clear philosophical option with which he could identify himself, much less articulate.

The real Evatt could and can be known only through an understanding of his social-political philosophy, that is, the frame of thought through which he observed and acted. Since he was not in a position to articulate his own conceptualisations, he could not share them easily. It is only recently that a language that could communicate his conceptual framework has evolved.

Evatt’s time was one of those ages that heralds a significant paradigm shift, but one in which the new paradigm was not explained sufficiently clearly to overcome the resistance that prevented its public consideration. Imagine you were one of the first people to entertain the
idea that the world was round. Even without overwhelming empirical evidence, the new concept made sense to you intuitively. Theoretically it solved all kinds of problems inherent in the previous paradigm. Imagine your frustration when traditionalists would not even consider such a paradigm shift, and treated you as somewhat eccentric.

Even worse is to live at a time when such a paradigm shift is taking place in the field of political philosophy. Flat and round are easily grasped; changes in political philosophy introduce new concepts, and require altered meanings of existing terms. The innovative thinker is not merely eccentric, but also politically dangerous. This was the situation that Evatt faced. If Evatt was enacting the same role today, he would be understandable and understood. He would be regarded as a profound, but otherwise ordinary person. From this perspective, Evatt was a man before his time, making him seem eccentric because he was a man out of his time.

Perhaps I was one of the few who had some inkling of the thinking of this unusual person. This was not primarily because I had to work closely with him. Indeed, I was selected to work with him because, as a junior officer and still working on my PhD thesis, I was obviously struggling with the same macro or overall approach from a behavioural rather than an institutional point of view. I did not fit well into the official role which required rapid responses to the details of complex foreign policy issues contained in the daily flow of telegrams, details dictated by nationalism and power rather than by the human problems that lay below. So I was sent over to the office of the Minister to be the link with the Department of Foreign Affairs.

I recall that one Friday after a busy post-war Cabinet week during which I saw little of him, I needed, as Departmental Head, decisions on several matters. I travelled with him in his car to Goulburn, with a car tracking me to bring me back to Canberra. We had the kind of conversation which was not unusual, and which was most enjoyable. The driver, had he not known otherwise, could have thought we were a couple of political philosophers from the Australian National University. We covered all kinds of topics, but despite my constant attempts to direct the conversation towards matters of immediate concern, we did not get around to them. I got out of the car and was driven back to Canberra.

Looking at Lake George I began to wonder how I could deal with
the issues on which I needed decisions. By the time we had started to climb the hill at the end of the lake it occurred to me that the answers were all there in the discussions we had had. I went back to the office and sent off several telegrams with full confidence that they reflected the decisions of the Minister. Indeed, this describes quite accurately much of the decision-making process. Provided the philosophical framework was understood, decision making was no problem. In those days, before the need for party political compromise, the philosophical framework was clear.

If we were to trace developments in thought from those days of political ideologies and bigotry to the present, we would have an understanding of Evatt the unpredictable jurist, of Evatt the defender of the underdog, of Evatt the inept party politician, and of the Evatt to whose social-political philosophy few could then relate. Evatt identified with people, not institutions. He confronted norms when they did not reflect individual concerns. Currently we search for explanations for street gangs, terrorism, the overthrow of entrenched regimes, why the most powerful state in the world was defeated in two wars by militarily weaker nations, and generally why authorities can no longer maintain law and order. The individual, together with the group with which the individual identifies, be it a nation, an ethnic group or some other, is in reality the politically significant unit of analysis. We are discovering, to employ the title of a recent book, *The Power of Human Needs*¹, needs such as personal identity and recognition, along with security and development.

In considering failures in political philosophies and policies, we are beginning to appreciate that Western societies are only a few generations removed from forms of feudalism in which power-elite institutions and their preservation were the main concern. There is in such a power-elite system the implied assumption that the individual is infinitely malleable and has the capacity to adjust to the requirement of the society. It is further assumed that authorities have the power to ensure conformity.

But when faced with street gangs and their alienation from society, terrorists and their strongly felt sense of injustice, and ethnic minorities who cannot be made to accept a status given them within a majority-government system, we are faced with the realities of human behaviour: there are certain human needs that require satisfaction, and that
will be pursued by whatever means are available, sometimes regardless of consequences to self or society.

This recognition of the person as the important unit of analysis has far-reaching implications. Law and order cannot always be maintained by coercive means. The only effective control of the individual and that person's identity groups is through values attached to relationships. Unless authorities at all levels, from the family to the state, have a legitimised status — that is, they derive their authority from those over whom they exercise it — there cannot be effective control of human behaviour. Social institutions and policies must ultimately adjust to the requirements of human needs, not the other way around. This lay at the basis of Evatt's thinking, but in those days it would have been unacceptable to articulate it in this way.

This focus on the person rather than on the preservation of institutions has now made possible the emerging field of conflict resolution and conflict prevention. If coercive policies and deterrence cannot be effective, then thought has to be given to decision making that is in another frame, one that seeks to cater to human needs. Given the failure of coercive policies, there is no option other than problem-solving conflict resolution and policies designed to prevent conflict. This is not a statement of ideology or a value statement: it is merely an observation of political realism that confronts the assumptions of traditional power politics. Herbert Evatt, the defender of the underprivileged, would feel very much at home reading the emerging a-disciplinary literature on human behaviour.

It was precisely because he was concerned with problem-solving conflict resolution, rather than authoritarian dispute settlement, that Evatt was misunderstood as a jurist and, to his credit, a failure as a party politician. The adversarial party political system was quite outside his intellectual frame. I recall that, soon after becoming Minister for External Affairs, Evatt made attempts to approach R.G. Menzies with war-time policy propositions. Evatt was quite amazed that Menzies refused, politely of course, to discuss or explore possible agreed options. Evatt understood problem-solving processes, and indeed enjoyed the exploratory discussions they involved. He wrongly assumed Menzies would respond in the same way.

Problem-solving conflict resolution is still not part of any consensus understanding. The terms "disputes" and "conflicts" are used inter-
changeably, as are “settlement” and “resolution”. It is only in the emerging literature on conflict resolution that these terms have distinctive meanings.2 “Disputes” involve negotiable interests, while “conflicts” are concerned with issues that are not negotiable, issues that relate to ontological human needs that cannot be compromised. Accordingly, “settlement” refers to negotiated or arbitrated outcomes of disputes, while “resolution” refers to outcomes of a conflict situation that must satisfy the inherent needs of all. Hence we have dispute settlement and conflict resolution.

The distinction between disputes and conflicts provides us with two conceptual frames: on the one hand, situations that are negotiable; and on the other, those in which there can be no compromise. These distinctive conceptions imply two very different means of treatment. The first group are subject to judicial and arbitrated processes, but the second require analytical problem solving.

Evatt had an intuitive sense of the difference between disputes and conflicts and, therefore, of the separate processes of negotiation and analytical problem solving. He had no problem adjudicating disputes. But as Attorney General he was always most reluctant, to the dismay of his Department, to put his signature on documents that involved deep-rooted human needs. He would always want to know more of the circumstances, something the legally trained staff of the Attorney General’s Department regarded as irrelevant.

From the beginning of World War II, the time when Evatt became active in Federal politics, political decision making conformed to the power political track described by Morgenthau just prior to World War II.3 There was no theory of behaviour that explained conflicts (as distinct from disputes), from which could be deduced the appropriate means of handling them.

What is clear in retrospect is that what was then termed “political realism”, that is, the political reality of power and power solutions to problems, was realistic only in the limited sense that it was practice. From early feudalism to the present day, practice has been to govern through coercion. There has been no behavioural theory that justified this political realism. Failures of practice, as evident in deviant behaviours, revolutions and wars, could not be explained except in terms of failure to employ sufficient power. There being no theory, there was no explanation of conflicts, and no basis on which to predict future
conflicts. Political realism has now been shown to be unrealistic in behavioural theory, and self-defeating in practice.

The traditional so-called “idealists” also lacked a theory. There was a belief system based on a desire for cooperative relationships, but no theory that could explain conflict, much less justify alternative problem-solving approaches to policy. This was Evatt’s problem. There was and still is an alarming void: power politics has failed domestically and internationally, but no alternative has been articulated and applied as policy. This was the bankrupt state of civilisation in the middle of the twentieth century.

Evatt knew that Japan had no option but to respond by force to Western policies that had cut it off from raw materials and markets. Similarly, he saw the emergence of Nazism and Fascism as responses to short-sighted Western policies going back to World War I settlements, and dysfunctional economic policies prior to and during the Great Depression. For him there were problems to be solved, not disputes to be settled by force. Post-war Japan and Germany demonstrate the validity of this thinking: the Western allies have had to accede to pre-war demands for equal commercial opportunities. The war was, in retrospect, the outcome of short-sighted Western power-political decision making. But there was no conception of conflicts being a symptom of problems requiring solutions. On the contrary, a willingness to be analytical and to discuss was, within this power framework, a sign of weakness.

An insight into Evatt’s thinking is provided by the message sent just prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor to Secretary of State Hull, suggesting a last-minute attempt to persuade Japan to call off its aggressive responses on the promise that there would be a reconsideration of Western trade policies. This could be interpreted as further evidence of his impractical “idealism”, or alternatively as evidence of his insight into the nature of conflict and the need to resolve problems rather than settling them temporarily by force. It is not surprising that Evatt also took a special interest in post-war reconstruction, seeking to make sure not only that peace agreements and post-war reconstruction did not merely re-establish those policies that led to war, but also that they attempted to resolve the causal underlying problems.

As with any paradigm shift, however, there was resistance from both scholars and practitioners. This is understandable, especially in this
case, since the paradigm shift touches on the foundations of political philosophy. It challenges the traditional notion that the person can be socialised into the requirements of institutions, and asserts that institutions must accommodate in a continuing way to certain inherent and universal human needs. This is what Herbert Evatt was getting at, and which makes possible a valid interpretation of his legal judgments, his writings and his policies.

For Evatt, the issue during and after World War II was not fascism, capitalism or communism. For him civilisation was at a critical state, perhaps more critical than at any past stage. We see more clearly now that the issues over which World War II were fought were trivial, bypassing the main causal ones that are still with us and which relate to recognition, autonomy and opportunities for development. Capitalism, communism and their various versions were failing even back in those days, which of course was the reason for the war. All systems have been based on the same assumption: that the person, and therefore the nation, is wholly malleable and can be socialised or coerced into required behaviours. It is now becoming clear that no increase in courts, police or alternative dispute settlement processes, and no strategic deterrence policies, can make up for the inherent deficiencies of these systems.

The reality is that no system has the means by which to deal with its problems or the conflicts it creates within or between nations. No political system to date has had effective means of system change, other than system overthrow by violence, which merely leads to another power elite system. Conflict resolution processes and conflict prevention policies are, in the alternative paradigm, the means of constant system change. Legal and precedent norms give place to norms that reflect behavioural requirements.

The question that Evatt, and those few who thought like him, wished to pose was whether, and to what extent, analytical problem-solving processes, widely applied, can promote the means of continuing change and contribute to an adjusting political system.

Disputes over negotiable interests will always exist, as will problems of management amongst persons who have common goals and values. But both can be dealt with by applying consensus norms, and by management techniques. Here Alternative Dispute Resolution has an important contribution to make. Quite simple training can lead to
greatly improved management techniques, and appropriate institutional forms of mediation can deal with interest disputes if there are no other underlying issues.

With conflicts, however, a far deeper analysis of relationships is required. Furthermore, it is not sufficient to deal with particular cases and institutionalise the means of dealing with them. There must be policies that prevent conflicts arising. Prevention becomes the main task and conflict resolution becomes part of the decision making. Problem-solving processes and conflict prevention policies are the missing ingredients in dealing with political systems as we have experienced them, all inadequate and subject to crisis and failure.

Such problem solving is outside any ideological concept. It is neither “right” nor “left”. It is applicable to all systems, being a process and philosophy that brings systems together. No wonder Chifley was annoyed with Evatt when he attempted behind the scenes to resolve the coal strike!

It is from this perspective that Evatt can be explained. I wish to emphasise that this is not rationalisation or imposing ideas on Evatt's thinking. It is merely explaining why Herbert Vere Evatt had to be a failure as a party politician, especially given the domestic and international conditions of the post-war period.

An unconventional though learned jurist, Evatt was an exacting and stimulating minister in charge of two departments of government. But he had little understanding of, or feel for, party politics. He could not be put into any “left-right” or ideological category — and was, therefore, not understood according to the criteria of his day. A special category had to be invented, “the eccentric”.

Evatt was exacting and difficult as a government minister. Many found it hard to work with him. He had little respect for the majority of his public servants. During the war he ignored them, and quickly took decisions with little consultation. He challenged advice and had little respect for those who were not prepared to defend their positions. He respected commitment and strongly argued positions. He had little respect for those who bowed to his views.

Evatt was in his element in the immediate post-war days of cooperation and collaboration. He enjoyed extensive discussions in Wellington and London on the draft United Nations Charter immediately before San Francisco. He was, by contrast, lost in the subsequent Cold
War days that reintroduced ideological party politics in domestic and international relations.

Evatt was not greatly interested in the micro, that is the specific case and the specific decision, and expected it to be deduced from the macro. He was impatient with those who could not translate the macro into the micro. Those who are familiar with public service traditions will appreciate the anxiety of his officials. But he gave strong support when he felt that this translation was being accomplished.

In 1944 I attended an International Labour Organisation conference in the United States. In anticipation of an amendment Australia would seek in the UN Charter, I pressed through a resolution obliging countries to pursue full employment policies, believing that post-war reconstruction for smaller states would rest heavily on demand in the larger states. Although the US Labor Secretary went along with it, the State Department did not. When there were demands for recommittal, the Australian Embassy argued that I had overstepped the mark. I sent through the local post office an in-clear telegram to Evatt explaining the messy situation and asking for instructions. I waited anxiously for the reprimand, and very soon received an in-clear message to the hotel which read, “You have to break eggs before you scramble them. Regards.”

After the United Nations conference at San Francisco, Evatt took the view that the Department of External Affairs knew his position, knew the Charter, and therefore knew what policies to deduce in his absence. The only instruction for several years was, “Follow the Charter”. It was only later, when he was required to compromise and to be the party politician, that he placed restrictions on such decision making. Empirical data and their interpretation are never easy. I have read many PhD theses and other documents covering aspects of the Evatt period in foreign policy making. I rarely recognise anything I read. The formal documents do not contain the full story. Many documents have disappeared. Indeed, most decision making is not documented. This retrospective analysis of his thinking and social-political philosophy is my portrait of Herbert Vere Evatt, one-time Minister for External Affairs and Attorney General.
In the great game of high politics, the role and importance of seemingly lesser players is often overlooked and eventually forgotten. So it is in histories of World War II for the Southwest Pacific and for Australia, the region's geographically largest nation. So it is for Australian-American relations in the midst of a conflict that reshaped the geopolitical, economic, and even ideological face of the entire world.

Nothing has made, and continues to make, Australians bitter and angry more than to be taken for granted. Britain had made a habit of it even as the colony developed its own identity as a nation—well before official independence. The most flagrant examples came in the two twentieth century world wars. Had Britain equalled, on a per capita basis, Australia's contributions and losses in World War I, His Majesty's Government would have sued for peace. Then, in the early years of World War II, Britain followed a logical Germany-first policy without ever consulting the Australians. Troops from Down Under, their homeland directly threatened by rapid Japanese expansion, were expected (not asked) to participate in campaigns across North Africa that were peripheral to both the Pacific and the European wars—though not peripheral to British imperial interests. Then came the Americans, MacArthur and Roosevelt, who treated Australia as a launching pad either for personal fame or for a counter-attack against the Japanese. Granted, the Australians desperately wanted the American presence, but decision making was reserved to Washington.

Into that atmosphere came the man who created the first Australian Ministry for External Affairs (after all, British Governors-General had argued, that sort of thing is taken care of in London, isn't it?). Dr. Herbert V. "Doc" Evatt possessed a keen mind, a quick temper, an abrasive manner, political ambition, and an intense sense of being an Australian. Whatever his private charm and warmth, as a public
official he was aggressive and intense. Which leaves the question, did that style work on the international scene? Did his forays into great power politics achieve his goals, or merely create minor tempests that men like Roosevelt simply steered around?

As with almost everything in "Doc" Evatt’s career, attempts to answer that question have generated angry, emotional reactions. Yet for all the smoke and fury, those arguments are but proxy for a bigger battle; the broader, often presentist arguments among Australians over national self-consciousness versus colonial mentality, over dependency versus an independent foreign policy, over nationalism versus the imposed internationalism of an imperial structure. Taken as part of such far-reaching and crucial debates, Evatt’s personality and politics seem less important, and the relationships between governments and societies — in this case between Australia and the United States — take on a different perspective.

That is not to say individuals don’t matter — they do. But, in modern nation-states and particularly in democracies, such leaders operate within both the immediate geo-political and the deeper intellectual and assumptional context of the political economy and the society they govern. That Evatt, and Australia, “had almost negligible influence” on American strategy is all too obvious. But, as Minister for External Affairs, Evatt did play a significant role in bringing and keeping Australia and Australian interests before Roosevelt; and getting the attention of one of the Big Three during World War II was no small accomplishment.

The Australian’s temper tantrums and rudeness were notorious. He had “a streak of the larrikin” in him, wrote both diplomat-historian Paul Hasluck and historian William Roger Louis. American Secretary of State Cordell Hull apparently found Evatt as disagreeable as Charles de Gaulle, and US Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall warned Evatt against “tirades” and “tempestuous performances”. Churchill, after characterising Evatt as someone who had succeeded in Australian politics by being hostile to Great Britain, then pointedly asked Roosevelt to pass on any personal impressions of how he got along with the Australian. Evatt’s unbridled tongue and pen prompted the Australian Minister in Washington in 1944, Frederic Eggleston, to instruct his embassy staff to clear with him all messages sent by Evatt for forwarding to various American leaders. That tactless choler made
him someone to avoid, but was hardly Australia's major problem in its relations with the United States.

From an American perspective, Evatt was a bit player. Perhaps the most revealing evidence for that is the complete absence of his name from any file folder at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library. A small amount of correspondence to and from Evatt appears in other files, and Australian leaders like John Curtin have files of their own. But Evatt was, apparently, not important enough to get his name into the subject index. Nor are there any pictures of FDR with Evatt — other than group photos of the Pacific War Council — which is also unusual. A quick look at the wartime volumes of *Foreign Relations of the United States*, the basic documentary collection of papers relating to American foreign policy, drives home the point. Evatt barely makes a cameo appearance. For American diplomats, he was a relatively minor figure whose appearances in the pages of the official record increased only when he was particularly testy.

That was, in large part, a function of how official Washington viewed Australia. For 1942, the year of greatest wartime crisis in the Southwest Pacific, there are no entries under Australia in the pages of the wartime *Foreign Relations* volumes. For the remaining war years, the few papers pertaining to Australian-American relations are entered under the subtitle “The British Commonwealth”.

But Roosevelt did not ignore his partners in the Pacific, even if historian Roger Bell caught the essence of the relationship in the title of his study, *Unequal Allies: Australian–American Relations and the Pacific War*. The creation of Pacific War Councils in both London and Washington indicates that the nations of the Southwest Pacific could not be ignored, even if those councils became less than what Australians wanted; more than what British Prime Minister Winston Churchill thought necessary; and just what the doctor ordered as far as Roosevelt was concerned.

A Pacific War Council in Washington grew out of Australian and New Zealand discontent with Churchill's proposals for channeling their input on strategy and policy. His idea, offered during meetings with Roosevelt immediately after the Pearl Harbor attack, called for an advisory group for the Southwest Pacific composed of Britain, the two Commonwealth nations, and the Netherlands. Its purpose was to present a united Imperial position to the Americans. Australian Prime
Minister John Curtin, already at odds with Churchill over the withdrawal of Australian troops from the Middle East and British defense strategy in the Pacific, insisted on a “Pacific Council” based in Washington that would include the United States and China as well. Not only did Curtin reject Britain as sole spokesperson for the Southwest Pacific nations, but he staked out Australian interest in the affairs of the entire Pacific region, not just the southwest portion.9

While the American military wanted no interference from “lesser” allies in its conduct of the war, the assignment of the Pacific Theatre as an exclusive US responsibility (done, of course, without consulting anyone but the British) convinced Roosevelt and his closest adviser, Harry Hopkins, that “difficulties and delays” would result if all consultations about the Pacific had to go through London. Unspoken but clear was the message that leadership in the region had to come from Washington. As Evatt himself pointed out, the crisis was “affecting not only England but the structure of the Empire itself”.10

When the “Doc” appeared on the Washington scene in mid-March 1942, he hoped to insure that the new Pacific War Council that Roosevelt had outlined would develop into a vehicle for effective Australian input into the making of wartime strategy and the allocation of war materials that would follow. That never happened.

Whatever the run-up, the Pacific War Council in Washington was right out of Franklin Roosevelt’s handbook (unwritten, of course) for government administration. There was no secretariat, no formal executive powers, no official minutes, no formal records, no agenda. The stated responsibilities of the Washington council were duplicated by the London variation on the same theme. The Council was personally dominated by the President, who presided at all its meetings in a casual, conversational, folksy manner that belied the advantage he held not only as the United States representative, but also as the only head of government regularly present. It was a chance for him to play the Dutch uncle, as he loved to call himself when he practised the role he saw for himself in the postwar world — that of senior adviser to the world’s political leaders.11

Why would the President of the United States, in the midst of an all-consuming war that made immense demands on his time and energies, preside over meetings of a group that was, in the words of the British Ambassador in Washington, Lord Halifax, “merely a facade”? 
The American Joint Chiefs of Staff went along since it would permit the other Pacific allies “to let off steam, but not... in any way affect the United States in its military decisions”. But, as ever, Roosevelt’s purposes are shrouded in misleading public and private comments.

He told John “Gil” Winant, the US ambassador to Britain, “my own Pacific War Council serves primarily to disseminate information as to the progress of operations in the Pacific — and secondly to give me a chance to keep everybody happy by telling stories and doing most of the talking”. Similarly, once he had agreed with Hopkins’ arguments in favor of a Washington PWC, he casually told reporters there was no need for another body to consult with about the Pacific, although something “with a fancy name” would be alright “if it would make anybody happy”. It made a number of people happy, including Franklin Roosevelt and not including Winston Churchill.

A week later, FDR emphasised the consultative nature of the Council. Asked by a reporter if each of the powers represented would “have equal representation and equal powers”, FDR said that wasn’t the issue since they were just “consultative,” and warned the press not to be didactic. The Council “doesn’t go out and fight,” he pointed out. Asked if the PWC would discuss supply allocations, Roosevelt used silliness — his favorite tactic with the press:

No. About the — what time the moon is going to rise tomorrow night. They are going to consult on the general progress of defending ourselves against the powers of darkness,... It is not supply, and it is not fighting a naval action, and it is not sending airplanes at a given time tomorrow night.

The reporter, satisfied, sat down. He — and everyone there — understood that the President, by gently ridiculing the question, had said that the Pacific War Council would not have any decision-making function. If the reporters knew, what about Evatt?!

What Roosevelt wanted to avoid was squabbling among War Council members, especially if it pitted small against large nation. That was always an undercurrent, but it emerged into the open only once, in May 1943, when China’s representative, T.V. Soong, and Churchill, in Washington for a meeting with Roosevelt, got into a nasty argument. Soong, angry about decisions not to push a campaign in Burma, asked “how can the Englishmen, who were so feeble in their conduct of the war in Malaya, fight such magnificent battles as they have fought in Africa?” He concluded that leadership was the problem, whereupon
Churchill sprung to the defense of British generals. It was just the sort of unproductive name-calling that FDR feared, and that he otherwise managed to avoid.\textsuperscript{15}

For Roosevelt, the PWC proved to have a number of advantages. It added prestige to the role of China — something the President worked on constantly during the war (and something that invariably raised Australian hackles). It provided an opportunity to demonstrate his anti-colonialism by giving the Philippines a seat.\textsuperscript{16} But underlying Roosevelt’s relationship with the PWC were two issues. The most immediate was the non-debate over the Europe-first strategy. The second was his broad conception of the structure of the post-war world in the Pacific.

British, Canadian, and American military representatives had agreed on a “Hitler-first” strategy in January–February 1941, during the so-called ABC-1 talks. That strategy was accepted by Churchill and Roosevelt at their first wartime meeting on warships anchored in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland, a decision that was not formally passed on to their Pacific allies — Australia, New Zealand, China, the Netherlands (wherein lies a tale concerning Dr Evatt, to be taken up shortly). In the aftermath of the Pearl Harbor attack, even Roosevelt wondered if he could stick to the Hitler-first strategy, and Churchill hurried across the Atlantic to do what he could to insure the President did not change his mind.\textsuperscript{17} Throughout 1942 and into the following year, the White House came under heavy criticism for not responding with overwhelming force to the insult and humiliation of Pearl Harbor. The Hitler-first approach was not publicly proclaimed, more for domestic reasons than those of military secrecy.\textsuperscript{18} As late as April 1943, Harry Hopkins wrote British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden that “all that crowd [the Hearst newspapers, etc.], of course, would make a separate peace with Hitler tomorrow if they could get away with it”.\textsuperscript{19} Australian challenges to that policy would only strengthen the hand of FDR’s critics.

Yet what else could Australians do in the wake of Pearl Harbor, the fall of the Philippines, and the rapid Japanese advance into the Southwest Pacific? Evatt apparently failed to catch the hint of agreed upon Anglo-American strategy when, during the first meeting of the PWC, the discussion turned to supply requirements in the European Theatre. But at the second PWC meeting, a week later, Roosevelt put his cards on the table — even if they were face down. He stated flatly that Russia
was the only nation conducting “full scale offensive operations against the enemy”, and “that if Germany were defeated, the defeat of Japan would not necessarily insure Germany’s defeat [...]. Accordingly, the United Nations might have to make a decision as to whether or not a second front should be opened on Germany” and to “sweeten” the supply agreements they had with the Russians.\textsuperscript{20}

If Evatt was “surprised” by his discovery of the Atlantic Conference agreement on a Europe-first strategy, then he had no one to blame but himself. Even with the real fear among Australian officials that the Japanese would invade, a trained legal mind like his could not have missed the meaning of the President’s statements. Yet his report to Prime Minister Curtin contained no mention of Roosevelt’s discussion of a second front to aid the Soviets. If the “Doc” did fail to grasp Roosevelt’s intentions, it could only be because the Australian did not want to believe. Perhaps he never expected the Pacific area to receive “equal” emphasis, and his manoeuvrings were aimed simply at getting Australia the best possible deal, but that was not what he reported to Canberra.

Regardless of when Evatt finally realised, or accepted, the reality of Europe-first, it was a theme Roosevelt pounded away at consistently. He brought up the difficulties of preparing for a Second Front and of providing sufficient supplies to the Soviet Union at almost every one of the twenty-five Pacific War Council meetings held in 1942. General MacArthur’s suggestion that “the best way to help Russia is to start an offensive against the Netherlands East Indies” was dismissed by Roosevelt as “circuitous thinking”. When Dixon mentioned Australia’s eagerness to open an offensive, Roosevelt made no response, but then swiftly closed the meeting with a warning that “shipping and the Russian front are the two most critical items at the moment”. When New Zealand’s Prime Minister Peter Fraser suggested that a second front in the Southwest Pacific seemed more promising than one in Europe, Roosevelt presented the war against Japan as one of attrition — a response the Australian Minister in Washington correctly interpreted as a restatement of the argument that the defeat of Japan would not cause Germany to collapse.\textsuperscript{21}

The President’s real problem in this instance was not his allies, but the American public. He had to avoid and suppress any public debate over offensive action against Japan in 1942, for emotions would surely
decide that argument in favor of the Pacific-first advocates. He com-
plained to the Pacific War Council, in July 1942, that newspaper
columnists didn’t have the big picture, and mocked their recommend-
dations: “Forget Egypt, forget China, forget everything, and get the
little so-and-so’s out of the Aleutian Islands. Of course we want the
Japanese gotten out of the Aleutians. We must remember that at the
moment there are bigger things which face us.”^22 A few months later,
when Prime Minister Curtin, prompted by MacArthur, suggested a
reexamination of broad wartime strategy, “the intimation being that
the Southwest Pacific was not being given the consideration which ... that area warrants”, the President remarked that the Second Front
“would give aid to the whole picture”, complained about the lack of
shipping, and then slyly noted that the Southwest Pacific was only
one-third of the Pacific region — a revealing remark that again was not
repeated to Canberra.*^3

That concern about domestic American pressure makes sense out
of Roosevelt’s appointment of General Douglas MacArthur as Su-
preme Commander in the Southwest Pacific. In 1942, MacArthur was
the nation’s most renowned soldier, unscathed by the questions about
the defense of the Philippines that would arise after the war. His
much-publicised appointment gave the appearance of emphasis on the
Pacific.^24

That was not, of course, the only reason for MacArthur’s selection.
America’s search for a hero in the Philippines had focused on the
general, making it difficult for Roosevelt to ignore him, whatever their
mutual dislike and past differences. But Roosevelt had bypassed “po-
itical” generals before. He disliked selecting subordinates who had
independent political support, and never did so in his military appoint-
ments, save for the special case of Douglas MacArthur.25 MacArthur’s
personality and Republican credentials may have diminished his credi-
bility in Roosevelt’s Washington, but the President wanted results,
regardless of who provided them.

Roosevelt dealt with MacArthur in much the same way he coped
with Charles de Gaulle, another major player the President found
difficult. Roosevelt’s policy toward France, especially post-war
France, flowed from his assessment of what best suited US national
interests and his own foreign policy goals — not whatever personal
contretemps existed between him and the haughty, independent
Frenchman. Likewise MacArthur, and for that matter the aggravating Evatt. The Australian was less important in Roosevelt's scheme of things than were De Gaulle and MacArthur, but FDR reacted similarly to all three. Each was a difficult personality, a pain-in-the-neck. But Roosevelt did not let personality stand in the way of results — and his relationship with Evatt was no exception. There is nothing in the record to indicate that the President's policies toward Australia were shaped by irritation with or antagonism toward Evatt. Moreover, such a Presidential reaction would be far outside the pattern Roosevelt followed with others (though the same cannot be said for Cordell Hull).

Anglo-American agreement on Europe-first did not mean that the Southwest Pacific was ignored, or even downplayed. The United States sent some 80,000 troops to the area during the first three months of 1942 — about four times the number sent to Britain and the European theatre. Nearly 300,000 soldiers were scheduled to go to the Pacific by the end of that year, a major Army commitment. But that was primarily a defensive move to preserve Australia as a base of future operations. Evatt and the government soon clamored for an offensive strategy in the Pacific.

But that was not to be. At no time did American or British leadership, military and civilian, seriously challenge the Germany-first strategy. For the Americans, part of that commitment reflected the dominant Army doctrine of concentration of power against the enemy's major force — a lesson learned in their Civil War. But it also reflected a major wartime reality. The Soviet Union was interested only in defeating Germany. Throughout the war Stalin bent over backwards not to give the Japanese any pretext for moving into lightly defended territory in eastern Siberia. Since the Japanese had decided, after the German invasion of Russia in July 1941, to concentrate on the conquest of China and Southeast Asia, hindsight shows there was little chance of the Japanese attack on the Soviets that Roosevelt seemed to think would come in 1942.

Not only was the Soviet Union focused completely on the European war, but British and American military planners concluded from the outset that only Soviet land strength could defeat Hitler's armies. Britain had survived the blitz on its own, and Anglo-American naval power could quarantine Hitler to the European continent, but that was not enough. Unconditional surrender, insofar as it meant the elimina-
tion of Nazi control over Germany, was an Anglo-American assumption from the very start, and that required the complete defeat of the German Army. Even Admiral Ernest King, head of the US Navy and an ardent advocate for his Navy’s war in the Pacific, admitted to reporters that, “in the last analysis, Russia will do nine-tenths of the job of defeating Germany”. United States Army planners put it succinctly even before America entered the war:

*The maintenance of an active front in Russia offers by far the best opportunity for a successful land offensive against Germany ...* [W]ere the Soviet forces to be driven even beyond the Ural Mountains, and were they there to continue an organized resistance, there would always remain the hope of a final and complete defeat of Germany by land operations.*

The Pacific-first issue did not die with the successful invasions of North Africa and Italy, or the battle of Midway and the capture of Guadalcanal. Even though Australians knew that Japan no longer threatened to invade, they continued to push (supported by MacArthur, who had his own reasons) the Anglo-Americans for greater offensive action in the Pacific.* But by mid-1943, Australian war aims had changed from survival and defense, to protection and expansion of post-war interests. As Prime Minister Curtin put it, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia would be the “policemen of the Pacific”.  

In October that year, the Australian War Cabinet laid out its goals with raw candor:

(a) It is of vital importance to the future of Australia and her status at the peace table in regard to the settlement in the Pacific, that her military effort should be concentrated as far as possible on the Pacific and that it should be on a scale to guarantee her an effective voice in the peace settlement.

(b) If necessary, the extent of this effort should be maintained at the expense of commitment in other theatres.*

Six weeks later, Curtin wrote to MacArthur insisting that Australian forces be used to liberate the League of Nations mandates held by Australia — Papua New Guinea, and various ex-German islands.* That was accompanied by statements of “special interest” in Portuguese Timor and proposals for joint development of the Netherlands East Indies. It all seemed to resurrect the ghost of the Paris Peace Conference after the First World War, with the conferees once again scrambling for favorable bargaining position at the great peace confer-
ence that Roosevelt always promised. Evatt, Curtin and Menzies — bitter political rivals — each hoped Australia would be near the head of the line when the spoils of war were dispensed, as the victors remade the map of the world and reassigned the territories of the losers. That the Dutch were allies and the Portuguese neutrals did not deter Evatt and the Australian leadership, anymore than it deterred Roosevelt and the United States from doing its best to "succeed John Bull" throughout the world.

In fact, short of an early collapse of German resistance, a Pacific-first or even Pacific-equal strategy was never a possibility. Complaints and insinuations that the North African invasion, the strategic bombing campaign, first priority to supplies for the Russians, unconditional surrender, and almost anything else except an early and massive invasion of Western Europe all needlessly postponed an offensive in the Pacific and thus prolonged the war, are counter-possible if not counter-factual positions. The last chance for a shift — the TRIDENT conference of May 1943 in Washington — found Churchill and Roosevelt only debating whether the invasion of France would eliminate any large-scale invasion of Italy. The President may have wanted to reopen the Burma Road, but that was to keep China in the war (like early aid to Russia) and to promote a pro-American attitude among those who would lead postwar China. Churchill's memoirs are hardly reliable when it comes to his goals and strategies, but his assessment of American aims was often on the mark:

The President and his circle still cherished exaggerated ideas of the military power which China could exert if given sufficient arms and equipment. They also feared unduly the imminence of a Chinese collapse if support were not forthcoming. Never did Roosevelt or Churchill seriously consider in mid-1943 displacing the Europe-first strategy with either a Pacific-first or even an "equal emphasis" approach.

Some have questioned the universalist assumption of Churchill and Roosevelt — that the complete defeat of Hitler was necessary to the welfare of the entire world. Thus nationalists, in Australia and elsewhere, challenge the grand strategy of the entire war, asking why their nations should have had to suffer human and economic losses to win a war that offered them little tangible benefit. Yet the force of that argument must be taken in the light of Australia's stated war aims as of October 1943. Had the government withdrawn all Australian forces from the war in late 1942 and simply declared a victory, Australian lives
would have been saved without threatening the war against Japan. But Australian leaders and, it appears, the public supported continued participation in the fighting. Honor was at stake, retribution was a factor, and sheer inertia played a role. But war aims, or, more properly, post-war aims, were the stated grounds for Australia's efforts to be a major player in the final defeat of Japan.

Evatt's 1943 mission to the United States was part and parcel of those war aims. With OVERLORD firmly in the saddle, there was no hope for a Pacific-first approach, and Evatt knew it. But if Australia had modern warplanes, especially long-range bombers, he believed the nation's influence in the postwar Pacific would be far greater. One questions the logic — since the United States had to supply the aircraft, why would one think such weapons entitled Australia to a major post-war role? But the purpose of Evatt's mission was clear. When he was fobbed off with vague promises, apparently just to get rid of him, the message seemed obvious. Australia had no important place in Roosevelt's postwar structure.38

That is hardly surprising, given FDR's approach to international relations. With dogged consistency, he pursued a combination of Great Power control (his preferred the word was "responsibility") and disarmament. As he told Soviet Foreign Minister V. Molotov in May 1942, "the United States, England, and Russia and perhaps China should police the world and enforce disarmament by inspection". The President allowed that smaller nations might not like that, but stuck to his guns. Whatever fine-tuning and trappings he added later, whatever tactical compromises he made, Roosevelt never moved from that position. His foreign policy, in the broadest sense, was remarkably consistent. He did not "lose sight" of post-war aims, either in Europe or the Pacific, but his postwar aims did not coincide with those of Australia — at least not perfectly. Smaller nations had social and economic rights, but it was up to the "policemen" to protect those rights.39 Asked by Lincoln MacVeagh, his ambassador to the Greek government in exile, to describe the military forces that postwar Greece and Yugoslavia would require, Roosevelt answered: "Will it be necessary for these states to defend themselves after this war?"40 When New Zealand's Walter Nash proposed a meeting of all the allied nations so that less powerful countries would feel they were part of the post-war planning process, Roosevelt, joined by Britain's Lord Halifax, warned
that “discussion of certain phases of post-war adjustment ... would be very harmful to united effort”. That was followed by the comment that the Pacific islands should be considered in the light of the good of the entire world, not the interests of particular nations.41 The Great Powers had made clear their thoughts on who should control the peace settlement.

Yet Australia did have a place in the President’s scheme, although that place is hard to define precisely even now, nearly a half-century later. For Evatt and other Australian leaders, deciphering Roosevelt, who had made a career out of avoiding specifics, was akin to solving the riddle of the Sphinx. Yet, the Pacific War Council could have provided key clues to that riddle, had Evatt and Owen Dixon,42 the Australian minister in Washington, only put them together.

Australian leaders were frustrated by the Pacific War Council because it did not make decisions. But Evatt and Australia may have missed an opportunity to influence Roosevelt’s foreign policies by not taking advantage of the PWC as a means of direct access to the President. Dixon claimed that PWC was “an important source of information”, and told the Australian War Cabinet that, although the PWC did not give Australia an effective role in strategic and military decision-making, one “advantage of the Council was that it enabled the views of the nations represented to be kept prominently before the President”.43 But neither Dixon nor Evatt used the Council in that manner. Dixon rarely spoke. Even when he did raise an issue, he never pursued the matter. Nor was Evatt any more vocal during PWC meetings. Yet both had the close attention of the President of the United States once or twice a month for as much as an hour. There were others who would have killed for that much access!

The opportunities were there. Even with Roosevelt’s inclination to relegate smaller nations to a follow-the-leader role in his post-war world, his emphasis on regional responsibility offered Australia a chance to advance its own war aims. Wartime strategic and military decisions in the Pacific were reserved to the Americans, but the postwar structure was another matter.

Evatt did make some tentative attempts. As early as April 1942, at only the fourth PWC meeting, he suggested that Roosevelt should consider a statement for the Pacific region similar to the Atlantic Charter, which had set out very broad war aims, including self-deter-
mination. The President, who spoke “at length” according to the
summary, agreed in principle, but thought the time was not right. When
Evatt brought the subject up at the next meeting, a week later, Roosevelt
seems not to have responded.\(^4^4\) There is no question that Roosevelt had
already developed strong ideas about the post-war world. He would
offer those thoughts to Molotov only a few weeks later. But the Pacific
War Council was not the venue for such discussions — at least not until
FDR could bring the Soviets in on his thinking. As for the British, he
had earlier proposed to Churchill that the United States and Britain
“police” the world during the transition from war to peace, but the
President would not lay out his broad scheme to them until his talks
with Anthony Eden in the spring of 1943, a year later.\(^4^5\) The Pacific
Charter never resurfaced at any PWC meeting. Moreover, Roosevelt
invariably insisted that the Atlantic Charter was “universal”, so there
was no need for anything more.\(^4^6\)

One aspect of Roosevelt’s postwar thinking that did crop up repeat­
edly at the Pacific War Council was his condemnation of colonialism.
Despite his preoccupation during 1942 with the European theatre,
particularly the Russian front, the sensitive issue of European empires
came up almost immediately. Again, that is no surprise. Roosevelt had
already begun his public and private campaign to prod Britain into
announcing a timetable for Indian independence, and despite Chur­
chill’s anger at what he considered interference, the President persisted.
When reporters asked why India was not on the Council, he quipped:
“I don’t think that the Pacific laps the shores of India”, and then
outlined the theatre structure that put India under British command,
while the United States had responsibility for the Pacific. He made no
mention of an earlier suggestion from Halifax that India have a seat on
the Council — which would have provided prestige and a platform for
a British-approved spokesperson who would defend London’s policy
in the subcontinent. Roosevelt dismissed that proposal on the grounds
that India was not part of the Pacific war. (Australia likewise opposed
Indian membership, just as it had tried to prevent China from being on
the Council. In each case, the Canberra government hoped to prevent
the presence of another large nation from distracting the Americans
away from the Southwest Pacific.)\(^4^7\)

Using the Pacific War Council as a forum, the President incessantly
attacked colonialism, though it was the French empire, in Indochina
and the Pacific islands, that provided his most frequent target. In May 1942, Roosevelt characterised the French as poor colonisers, citing Indochina as an example of their ineptitude. Exploitation and indifference had, he argued, left the natives unprepared for self-government and in need of major reform. He questioned the wisdom of letting France reoccupy various South Pacific islands, and connected postwar military security with decolonization by warning that the Pacific islands should never again be used to threaten the members of the Council. Not surprisingly, the State Department side-stepped a French request for membership on the Pacific War Council.48

Indochina and India were Roosevelt’s two main examples of the need for decolonisation.49 If the colonial grip could be broken there, it would collapse everywhere. India posed problems for wartime as well as post-war politics. Nationalist leaders there had, from the outset, threatened not to support the war effort unless Britain made firm commitments to self-government. When, at a PWC meeting late in July 1942, Owen Dixon raised the question of India and the war effort, Roosevelt hesitated, commenting that “it was a delicate subject to discuss”. He added that he had sent Churchill some suggestions, along with a copy of a long, forceful plea for “complete freedom” for India from China’s leader, Chiang Kai-shek. But two weeks later, Churchill’s firm rejection in hand, the President was more willing to broach the issue.50

Playing cute at first, Roosevelt remarked that the Council was not the proper place to discuss the Indian matter, but “we will, anyway”. He explained that, while India was not yet ready for self-government and that thousands of people had to be trained first, the whole thing could be worked out if the British would let the United States and China act as “amici curiae” who would not interfere but help to work things out. He went on to offer his analogy between India and the temporary government of the United States immediately after the American Revolution. In other words, the British should not demand a perfect solution, since the Indians would have to work it out themselves. There was no response from the British representative on the Council, Sir Ronald Campbell, to this suggestion, although Churchill thought the whole idea “madness” and mocked the comparison.51

Manuel Quezon of the Philippines, always ready to trumpet the benefits of American rule, waited a month before asking Lord Halifax,
the usual British representative on the PWC, for his thoughts on the Indian situation. The British ambassador gave the standard argument — using an appeal to democracy to prevent democracy by claiming that the Congress, the Indian nationalist political organisation, was not representative of the Indian people. Quezon retorted with praise for American treatment of the Philippine Islands and the recommendation that Britain should follow that example. When Halifax argued that Britain was preventing civil war, Roosevelt agreed that overnight change only courted trouble. But that concession did not lessen the thrust of the President’s insistence that change had to come.52

By October 1942, the New Deal had made an appearance at the Pacific War Council — as it did whenever Roosevelt began to think of change and reform in the post-war world. Eventually, a number of his concerns and schemes cropped up — an international currency (called a “demo” for democracy), reduced interest rates for public and quasi-public works, an international food conference to deal with inequities of supply and demand, a conference on post-war relief, and the problem of overpopulation. (This last item provoked New Zealand’s Nash to ask if the President was proposing racial intermixing. When Roosevelt said that the melting pot would become the norm after the war, Owen Dixon acidly commented to Captain McCrea that, if FDR was correct, it seemed of little importance who won the war against the Japanese.) PWC members did discuss the food conference idea a bit, and the meeting was eventually held. But Roosevelt’s other ideas, which were important to him and which Dixon passed on to Canberra, offered an opportunity-not-taken to broaden the impact of the Pacific War Council.53

That missed opportunity occurred, in part, because the President had no desire to use PWC meetings to deliberate on his reformist ideas (or anything else, for that matter). His proposals came more in the form of statements and musings than as topics for debate. Roosevelt’s conduct of PWC meetings — no agenda, no minutes, abrupt changes of subject, all in the form of a report to the Council by the President — inhibited discussion of awkward issues, and militated against any kind of searching examination of the issues. But, at the same time, the members of the Council were more interested in immediate geo-politics rather than longer-term issues of reform and change. Initially, Australian leaders and diplomats were understandably preoccupied with national defense
rather than issues of the post-war world. Yet, as the military picture shifted and Japan began to fall back, another geo-political concern — the disposition of islands and territories in the Pacific — took precedence. Even just the Pacific War Council records on this matter suggest nothing so much as greedy petitioners fighting for a place at the hungry table. Irrespective of postwar results (Western Samoa is independent, American Samoa is still American), the wartime scene was an unseemly scramble for territory — the Paris Peace Conference revisited.

If “Doc” Evatt has disappeared in this tale, it is by his actions, not by design. His appearances in 1943 at the PWC had little impact on either the Council or Australian-American relations. Even his abrasive style was, at least for the occasion, replaced by an unusual sense of diplomacy as he thanked the military forces of the Netherlands for their outstanding service in the war against Japan. Whatever the reasons for Evatt’s mellowness, it was not because the PWC was lapsing into disuse (as its cousin in London had long before). Even though the pace of PWC meetings dropped off to ten in 1943 from the twenty-four held in 1942, the meeting of the PWC held on 12 January 1944 seemed to augur a new and expanded role for the Council. That gathering found Roosevelt more candid than ever before, as he outlined the broad thrust of the agreements reached at the Cairo (1st and 2nd) and Teheran conferences in late 1943. He spoke of the United States acting as a “police agent” in the Pacific in the event of China’s unreadiness to assume that responsibility, and went on to suggest that Australia and New Zealand could act as “joint agents”. But that 36th meeting of the Pacific War Council proved to be its last.

A few days later came one of Evatt’s more famous, or infamous (to the Americans), initiatives; the Australian-New Zealand Agreement (ANZAC) of January 1944. The key passages for Australian-American relations declared that any “interim administration and ultimate disposal of enemy territories in the Pacific”, or “change in the sovereignty or system of control of any islands of the Pacific”, should have agreement from Australia and New Zealand. Cordell Hull, who blamed Evatt for the arrangement, condemned what he deemed a self-serving pact that would protect Australian territorial claims and preserve colonialism — a concern reinforced by Australian press claims that Canberra insisted on “unyielding sover-
eignty” over places like the Solomon Islands and New Guinea that fell inside “the natural defense zones of Australia and New Zealand.” Roosevelt, whose attention was elsewhere, was annoyed, while the British, who had suspected American intentions, were smug and amused. But that is a far cry from claiming, as Evatt and others have done, that the pact stopped American imperialism in the Southwest Pacific, forcing the United States to limit its aspirations to the ex-Japanese island mandates. Perhaps the US military had such broad expansionist dreams, but Hull and Roosevelt truly wanted to eliminate colonialism and substitute trusteeships that were accountable to the United Nations. That policy did not survive Roosevelt’s death and the onset of the Cold War — but that is a different tale.

Whatever effect the ANZAC agreement had on American expansion, Evatt’s attempts to justify the pact proved a death blow to the Pacific War Council. Stung by the vehemence of Hull’s criticisms, the Australian sent a long defence of the arrangement via the American Minister in Canberra, Nelson Johnson. In the process, Evatt committed a cardinal sin; he breached the confidentiality of the Pacific War Council by repeating remarks made to the group by Roosevelt on three occasions — each indicating American policy regarding a Pacific settlement. The First Secretary in the Australian Legation in Washington, A.S. Watt, accurately predicted the President’s reaction. Noting that the PWC kept no official minutes and that its proceedings were “unknown to American Departments including the State Department”, he warned that FDR would be “very annoyed”. Roosevelt had assumed that his comments, however indiscreet, before the Council were not for the record, and Evatt’s formal letter put the President “on the spot”. The result, thought Watt, would be fewer meetings of the PWC.

Roosevelt never convened another meeting of the Pacific War Council, and Australia lost a mechanism valuable both as a window into American thinking, and as a means of putting ideas directly before the President. A year later in January 1945, shortly before Roosevelt left for the Yalta Conference, Evatt tried to resuscitate the Council, for “the President spoke freely” there. What Evatt had in mind was for the PWC to evolve into a “Pacific Advisory Commission”. Foreshadowing his later efforts during the San Francisco Conference that summer, Evatt was searching for a means whereby less powerful nations could
make their voices heard. He asked the New Zealanders to work for a restoration of the PWC, but that government demurred, arguing that while it was time to make clear "that the smaller powers cannot contemplate a world run entirely by dominant great power", the Pacific War Council would not do the trick.

It was an idea that, proposed earlier, perhaps at some meeting of the Pacific War Council during 1944, might have fit into Roosevelt's regional system, despite his conviction that great power security was the key to peace. But that could not happen in the wake of Evatt's faux pas. An unenthusiastic Frederic Eggleston, by then the Australian Minister in Washington, recognising that the Southwest Pacific was not high on the President's list of priorities, put off Evatt by suggesting that FDR was so busy that he would refuse to call a meeting of the PWC.\footnote{60}

The Yalta Conference, the press of events, and finally Roosevelt's death on 12 April guaranteed that the PWC would not reappear, thus ending an institution that offered a means, indirect as it was, of influencing the post-war shape of that part of the world that Australians cared about the most. Perhaps Evatt's behavior was an excuse as much as a reason for Roosevelt. With the change of fortunes in the war, he had less need for a placebo to pacify his Pacific partners. Perhaps if Evatt had used the PWC more forcefully to bring up broad issues of wartime strategy and postwar planning, FDR would have done as he did in early 1944 — stop convening meetings — although that is unlikely if the members of the council had gotten together and asked for continued meetings.\footnote{61} But by 1944 the members were scornful of the impotence of the PWC and distracted by other, more immediate concerns.

Yet that impotence had been created, in part, by the members of the council. Australian diplomats in Washington were so preoccupied with issues of supply and immediate military strategy in the Southwest Pacific, that they were blind to broader and more important issues. All too many Australian leaders and diplomats had a parochial perspective of Australian interests. Their nation's survival in World War II depended on United States military might and action — and nothing Australia could do would change that. Yet Australians could have influenced the more subtle issues of wartime alliance and, more important, the post-war settlement in their region. But by the time policy-
makers came to concentrate on those issues, late in 1943 or early 1944, they had missed an opportunity to create a special relationship with Franklin Roosevelt — a relationship that might have gone a long way toward the equality that Australians, and particularly "Doc" Evatt, so ardently desired.
Herbert Vere Evatt is remembered in Australia as the best Labor politician never to have been Prime Minister. A brilliant lawyer and fighter for social justice and civil liberties, this publican's son from the Hunter Valley coalfields won every prize at school and university to become in 1930, at only 36 years of age, the country's youngest ever High Court judge. Then, in 1940, reversing the usual pattern, he resigned from the bench to enter Federal politics on the Labor side. Argumentative, often rude, but very able, he was Minister for External Affairs from 1941 to 1949, playing an important role in the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, and becoming president of its General Session in 1948. He led the Labor Party in opposition after Chifley's death in 1951, but proved incapable of preventing the great split in his party in 1955 over communism. Many doubted his judgment on this and other issues, even in the end questioning his sanity, and he was forced into early retirement from politics in 1960, spending a brief time on the New South Wales Supreme Court Bench before his death in 1963.  

As with so much else in Evatt's career, controversy surrounds his two highly publicised wartime missions as foreign minister to both Washington and London in 1942 and 1943. The first was undertaken immediately after the fall of Singapore with the Japanese poised to invade Australia and reinforcements urgently needed; and the second came in the aftermath of the Casablanca conference, with Australia pushing for a greater part in the rolling back of the Japanese Pacific empire and, by implication, a seat at the peace table. Evatt's supporters claim that his direct, larrikinish diplomacy won him significant victories each time, notably: bringing Australia's plight to US President
Franklin D. Roosevelt’s and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill’s attention; the formation of the Pacific War Council; obtaining Spitfires and other aircraft and supplies; and, most important, the discovery of the Allied grand strategy of “Beat Hitler First” and securing its modification in Australia’s interest. They dub him the “father” of an independent Australian foreign policy.\textsuperscript{2} His critics point out that his abrasive diplomacy was simply a nuisance to the British and Americans and that he obtained virtually nothing that was not already earmarked for Australia in accordance with the predetermined grand strategy. His brash and naive rhetoric, they say, was counterproductive to his nation’s interests.\textsuperscript{3}

Both views, in fact, obscure as much as they explain. The best context in which to understand the missions is one nearly all historians have ignored: that of the immediate political situation in which Evatt found himself, personally, in party and national terms, and internationally.\textsuperscript{4} Internationally, there was the obvious need to make Australia’s voice heard. Nationally and in party terms, it is crucial to remember that Prime Minister John Curtin’s Labor government held office at the time only with the support of two independents who might have crossed the floor at any moment. The missions were clear evidence that the government was doing all it could to convince the Allies to come more to Australia’s assistance. This was especially so of the 1943 mission which was planned as part of the run up to the federal elections. It had to be seen at home as a resounding success in order to boost Labor’s election chances. Doubtless for Evatt and Curtin at the time this was its most important function. Personally, the ambitious Evatt was often a troublesome rival to Curtin and a significant part of Curtin’s motivation in sending Evatt abroad for long periods on almost impossible missions was to get him out of the way. These political contexts must be understood if the missions are to be seen in their proper perspective.

Then there is the matter of Evatt’s own behaviour and negotiating style. Was he simply as unaware, awful, brash, gauche and rude as is so often portrayed, or did he consciously behave in that way for good reason? It is arguable that Evatt’s shrill nationalism in public, and his mixture of tantrums followed by moderation in private, were geared both to mark him and Labor out from their Anglo-Australian conservative predecessors, while at the same time aiming to secure, at a
deeper level, a degree of continuity and evolution towards common goals that the conservatives had not realised by their more deferential methods. His style of negotiation came from his legal and trade union training. He would make a bold bid for all that his side remotely desired — what lawyers call an ambit claim — and then moderate his position in private eventually settling for a realistic compromise. Evatt's grandstanding was partly for domestic political consumption and partly his staking out of an ambit claim. At base his bid for an independent policy was calculated carefully not to go too far, though it sometimes backfired.

Consummate politicians that they were, Roosevelt and Churchill soon discovered Evatt's game and, to humour Australia at little cost to themselves, connived to give him token trophies to take back to his party and electorate and to allow him to claim more influence on grand strategy than he ever had. For his part, Evatt knew from early on that it would be impossible to have any real impact on grand strategy. It was, however, quite easy, once he too had discovered the rules, to claim to have done so and not be contradicted. Evatt, too, was occasionally a shrewd manipulator of his circumstances so as best to present his achievements for public consumption. Not the least interesting aspect of his missions was the way he carefully created his own legend.

The First Mission, March–June 1942

Evatt's political style was rough and direct. He was a product of the famous Fort Street Boys' High School, a state-run selective school which specialised in turning bright working class boys into university scholarship winners. Its motto was and is Faber est quisque suae Fortunae, which loosely translated means "pull yourself up by your bootstraps". It was a place where excellence was demanded and no quarter was given or asked for, and headmasters and pupils delighted in outdoing Sydney's wealthy private schools scholastically and on the sporting field. Evatt refined his skills in the hard world of New South Wales Labor Party machine politics and at the equally cut-throat New South Wales Bar. No respecter of persons, for him, among equals ends usually justified means.

Before Labor came to office in October 1941, as a result of two conservatives crossing the floor, Evatt had been pushing in private for the formation of a national government; he had not resigned from the
prestige of the High Court Bench in order to languish in opposition. With Labor in power, Curtin had to find something substantial for his restless colleague to do, and he settled on the External Affairs ministry and the Attorney Generalship. Evatt quickly made his mark by employing his considerable constitutional lawyer’s skills to arrange for Australia to make a separate declaration of war from Britain’s on Japan despite Australia’s not having signed the Statute of Westminster in 1931 which would have given her the obvious right to make such a move. He then set about trying to embarrass Britain and the United States into granting Australia more aid in the developing Pacific war.

With Singapore under dire threat, Curtin and Evatt recalled two of the three Australian divisions fighting in the Middle East and thought about doing the same with the third. Curtin published his famous New Year’s message — “Australia looks to America free of any pangs as to [her] traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom” — and, when Singapore fell in February, he accused Britain, in a ferocious cable drafted by Evatt, of the “inexcusable betrayal” of Australia. It was decided soon, however, that Australia might be more effective with her pleas if Evatt were sent on a special mission to the seats of Allied power. For Curtin, this had the added advantage of removing a rival from the steps of the throne, as apparently Evatt was still intriguing against him even as Australia was threatened with invasion.

Evatt’s instructions required him to make contact with leaders at the highest level, to discover their plans and if necessary to argue about them in Australia’s interest; and second, to secure an increased flow of men and matériel to Australia. Evatt is “scared to death” of the long flight, the American minister in Canberra observed, but “he is going nevertheless, confident that his name will go down in history as Australia’s great man in this time of her need”. Before leaving Australia, Evatt told parliament that his main task was to see that the war against Japan was not forgotten in global priorities as the British and Americans were inclining to the view that Germany had to be defeated first. He also sent cables to his friends Felix Frankfurter, a US Supreme Court judge and confidant of Roosevelt, and Sir Stafford Cripps, a senior minister in the British cabinet. These messages criticised Churchill for ignoring Australia and anticipated a public debate when Evatt arrived in Washington and London. Frankfurter’s words in forewarning Roosevelt about Evatt are highly significant:

Impossible Missions 33
"You know how sensitive poor relations are . . . you need to satisfy them psychologically . . . soothe them with words." A State Department official had a similar view: "The Australian government is inexperienced and suspicious, standing outside, knocking on the door, with impertinence." "Tell Mr Roosevelt and the Cabinet to look out for their shirts ... Evatt is going to tell, not ask," the US legation in Canberra cautioned.

There were two subsidiary quarrels between Australia and her Allies which Evatt had to try to settle: over the fate of the 9th Division; and that concerning Churchill's invitation to Casey to leave the Australian legation in Washington to take up the post in Cairo of British Minister Resident in the Middle East. This latter question had so upset Curtin that he had virtually decided to publish his cabled disagreements with Churchill in a White Paper, mostly to show his left wing that he was standing up to Churchill over some things, even though he could not publish his much more significant disagreements over the planned diversion of the 7th Division to Rangoon and over the fall of Singapore. Despite Evatt's attempts to stop it, the White Paper duly appeared, much to the dismay of the British and Americans: "give me Allies to fight against" lamented General George C. Marshall, the US Chief of Staff; and a noted American columnist observed that "a quarrel in our ranks at this moment sets our teeth on edge".

Evatt arrived at the appropriately named Treasure Island flying boat base in San Francisco on 17 March, the same day that the American general, Douglas MacArthur, landed in Australia to assume command of all Allied forces there. Evatt lost no time in having preliminary talks with Marshall, Roosevelt and Harry Hopkins, the president's personal assistant. The president left Evatt in no doubt that he would hear no criticism of Churchill and that cordial relations between Australia and Britain had to be seen to have been reestablished before Australia could hope for any concessions. It was further agreed at the first meeting of Roosevelt's new Pacific War Council on 1 April that Evatt should prepare a memorandum on Australia's position which would be considered at the next meeting.

Evatt was desperate to be seen to succeed. In his inimitable fashion he claimed that he had been a prime mover in getting the Pacific War Council in Washington established. He cabled Curtin on 30 March that "one of the purposes of my mission has been achieved speedily" and
Curtin expressed his “deep satisfaction” that the council had been formed. He had certainly pushed for the council. However, the fact is that Roosevelt and Churchill had agreed to form it well before Evatt arrived in the capital. Evatt therefore was claiming a minor miracle: that he had worked so speedily that this part of his job had been accomplished even before he arrived! Further it was hardly the council the Australians had envisaged. Evatt had wanted an executive body with real power; what Roosevelt actually set up was an advisory talking shop.

Evatt’s written appreciation for the Pacific War Council pulled no punches. Australia was a “vital” area for the allies. To defend her he asked for three aircraft carriers, a submarine squadron, and a massive increase in the supply of heavy bombers and fighters, sufficient to double Australia’s twenty-one squadron air force. Further, by supplying up-to-date types, the RAAF’s efficiency would be increased out of recognition. As for the army, he said he was satisfied with the two American and two Australian divisions earmarked to join Australia’s five militia divisions for Australian defence. (Japan had thrown eleven divisions into her southward thrust, choosing to leave the bulk of her army in China and Manchuria, and it was estimated that she only had the shipping to mount, at most, a four division invasion of Australia.) Evatt also pushed for an executive rather than an advisory Pacific War Council. And in a fierce note to Hopkins he railed against the “tendency to take a complacent view of Australia”.

As predicted, Evatt’s abrasive methods did not endear him to the Americans. Henry Stimson, the Secretary for War, said he was “rumbunctious”, and Marshall disliked the way he “created a tempest wherever he came” and “dressed down everybody he came in contact with”. Not that Evatt noticed their adverse reactions. Within a week of his arrival in the United States, Evatt had cabled his Prime Minister that “relations that I have already established with the president and his special advisers are very close and, I believe, unique for an Australian”. Unique indeed! He also kept the pressure on the Americans by making a widely reported speech to the Overseas Writers Club in Washington in which he expounded his view that the Allies were fighting “one war” not two.

Evatt used every weapon in his armoury. In the privacy of a New York dinner party organised by the Council for Foreign Relations and
presided over by Felix Frankfurter, he ended his usual no-holds-barred speech “very quietly” with the words: “Please gentlemen, don’t misunderstand me. If I have to choose between my country going under and England going under, I should want my country to go under. For England is the bastion of us all.” And even Frankfurter was convinced that Evatt was sincere. More likely the intensely nationalist Evatt had changed tack to try yet another way of winning over the sympathy of his audience so that they might more readily agree to his main proposition for military aid to Australia. Though perhaps not entirely: it is also true that there was a corner of Evatt’s psyche, as with many Australians, that was instinctively, if at times ambiguously, British.

It would be tedious to give a blow-by-blow account of Evatt’s dealings with the Americans. Suffice it to say that he spent the month of April in Washington, save for a brief excursion to Canada, and left with very little that was concrete. No additional troops were sent beyond those agreed to in February. Roosevelt had promised him 500 aircraft for the US forces in Australia and 80 for the RAAF, but both allocations had already been made before Evatt arrived. He had tried hard to get 214 Dutch B-25 bombers and finally secured 19. These reinforcements were slim pickings indeed. All munitions were distributed by an Anglo-American board which resisted his entreaties, though he may have been responsible for getting 8000 extra submachine guns with ammunition.

Evatt could also claim some influence in the drafting of MacArthur’s directive, though his demands were barely met here either. The Australians wanted the directive explicitly to instruct the supreme commander to attack the Japanese. Then they would have something in writing which would justify their asking for more reinforcements for the South-West Pacific Area. In fact the directive ordered the supreme commander to fight a defensive war with his existing forces, though, as a sop to Evatt, it also asked him to prepare for an offensive at some undefined stage in the future. Evatt the constitutional lawyer saw in these words a loophole through which to argue for the allocation of more forces at a later date. But it was a very minor concession as the whole thrust of the directive was defensive. This did not stop Evatt from claiming, via an inspired cable by the Australian press correspondent George Wannecke to the Melbourne Herald on 28 April, that he had negotiated a “drastic revision” of Allied grand strategy. Rather
than simply “rate Hitler as the chief enemy” Evatt had ensured that the Americans in alliance with “Australia and other Pacific countries” were now committed to “an offensive policy against Japan”.\textsuperscript{25} As Evatt knew full well this was a ridiculous overstatement. Luckily, the cable was not published.

The trans-Atlantic flight via Portugal was bitterly cold. They were on oxygen nearly all the way,\textsuperscript{26} and there was considerable risk of their being shot down; when the Caseys departed on a similar flight a few weeks earlier they had their wills drawn up. Poor Evatt, who was physically no hero, suffered it all nobly. Once in London he set about seeing everyone that mattered as soon as he could. He attended a meeting of the war cabinet on his second day. He also gave his inevitable press conference. There was “no disloyalty in Australia” towards Britain, he said. But there was some concern that people in Britain and even in the United States saw the Pacific war as a “side-show” to the main events in Europe and the Middle East, and that was a mistake. The war was in reality a “whole”.\textsuperscript{27} As he explained to Curtin:

\begin{quote}
what I said to press conference was that in war against two enemies we cannot afford to ignore partner of Germany, i.e. Japan, and I illustrated this by stating that in a game of doubles tennis, one side cannot win by concentrating on one opponent, and ignoring his partner; ... it was dangerous underestimating Japan.\textsuperscript{28}
\end{quote}

Evatt was keen as always to argue his case in front of the widest possible audience.

The impression Evatt made on the British was no better than the one he made on the Americans. Churchill, who was punctiliously polite, observed in private that he could not “bear” the man; Brendan Bracken, Minister for Information, and Evatt’s host, said he was “a dreadful fellow”;\textsuperscript{29} and General Brooke thought him “thoroughly unpleasant”.\textsuperscript{30} Despite this, Evatt was “duchessed”, being invited to Chequers, taken to a cricket match, admitted to the Privy Council, and taken on a speech tour by Churchill.\textsuperscript{31}

Evatt’s negotiating style was blunt and abrasive. Brooke, for instance, took exception to Evatt’s production of “three strong blackmailing cards” — withdrawal of the 9th Division, or of the Australian airmen in Britain, and a request for two British divisions — unless more aircraft were allocated immediately to Australia. And added after a
second meeting: “he left with no more than he had come!” Evatt’s adviser, the Australian businessman W.S. Robinson, was well aware of the impression Evatt had made when he wrote to him that:

the moment has arrived when in your discussions you should adopt an attitude which could not but be regarded as warmly appreciative ... You’ve stated Australia’s case in no uncertain terms — the manner in which you have stated it eliminates the risk of its being forgotten by those who count. The judge and jury are on your side — don’t please risk irritating much less criticising them.

Within a fortnight of his arrival Evatt had demanded and been given a copy of the British war cabinet paper “WW1”, the main grand strategy document agreed between the British and American chiefs of staff in Washington the previous January. This was a particularly vital document for Australia, since, despite Japan’s entry into the war, it reaffirmed the earlier chiefs of staff decision in February 1941 to “Beat Hitler First”. Much has been written about Australia’s not being told of this decision and Evatt’s being devastated by the discovery, blaming Bruce, Page and Casey for not finding out earlier. The facts are that Australia was fully informed of the February 1941 decision and that Parliament discussed it and approved it in a secret session in June. It is true that in January 1942 Australia was not shown WW1 in its entirety — but neither were any of the other associated powers, China, the Dutch, etc. Each was only shown the section which immediately concerned it; which, in Australia’s case, was the one that said that a “holding” war would be fought in the Pacific. Indeed, Curtin was told by Churchill in December 1941 and January 1942 in no uncertain terms that “Hitler was still the main enemy” and that “there has never been any intention to make the main allied concentration” in the Pacific. The policy was alluded to publicly in speeches by the British General Alexander and the United States Navy Secretary Frank Knox, and even mentioned by Roosevelt at the first meeting of the Pacific War Council in Evatt’s presence. Curtin’s “Look to America” and Evatt’s speeches make no sense if they are not seen as pleas against an established policy. So it was only in a strictly legal and rather disingenuous sense of not having actually read WW1 itself in entirety that Evatt could claim ignorance. The most likely explanations for Evatt’s not telling Curtin of his discovery for two weeks — which historian David Day finds puzzling — are that Curtin knew the substance of it
already anyway, and that the legal hair-splitting argument that Australia
did not officially know took Evatt a while to cook up.

All this explains why Evatt argued realistically to the war cabinet,
not that “Beat Hitler First” should be abandoned, but that given that
Australia was needed as a base in the defensive war against Japan, and
as a source of supplies for the global effort, she was inadequately
defended. He mentioned that the main proposition of the grand strategy
might be questioned, but he did not bother to pursue the matter. That
is, he argued in terms of the agreed strategy and within the scope of the
directive to MacArthur. Obviously Evatt could be sane and sensible
when he thought that the situation demanded it.

What did Evatt achieve in London? He “discovered” the “Beat
Hitler First” strategy, but could not change it. He obtained Churchill’s
agreement to release for service in the Pacific the two brigades of the
7th Division stationed in Ceylon — though this was due anyway. He
secured a slight increase in the price the British were paying for
Australian wool. And Churchill ensured that he had something con­
crete by promising Australia three squadrons of Spitfires — two RAAF
(including that of the air ace “Bluey” Truscott) and one RAF; forty­
eight planes in all. These were described tellingly by Churchill to Evatt
as “your particular packet”; though Evatt labelled them grandilo­
quently as “a small air expeditionary force”.

When he landed back in Australia in mid-June, Evatt made the most
of his swag, claiming that he had assisted in the establishment of the
Pacific War Council, secured permission from Roosevelt for limited
offensive action against the Japanese in the near future, and succeeded
in obtaining the promise of much needed extra supplies of men and
matériel, particularly planes. Curtin expressed the government’s
“high appreciation” of Evatt’s “difficult mission” and for “what he
had achieved abroad”. But what did Curtin and his cabinet colleagues
really think?

At a Prime Minister’s war conference just before Evatt’s return
General MacArthur had delivered a just, if stern, military verdict, with
which cabinet had not demurred:

In regard to the results of Dr. Evatt’s mission … if he might speak with
frankness … Dr. Evatt was undoubtedly a brilliant advocate who, by the
skilful manner in which he had put his case, had aroused a live interest in
the English people as to the security of Australia, and had achieved a good
press … He had no doubt evoked a sympathetic hearing from Mr. Churchill
and other Ministers, but from the practical military point of view very little had been achieved. He added, however, that probably no one could have done better. As the cables showed, the efforts he had exerted had been those of a great pleader, but the agreement between Mr Churchill and President Roosevelt on grand strategy was a high hurdle to get over.43

Needless to say, despite Evatt’s claims to the contrary, Evatt failed to surmount the “Beat Hitler First” obstacle; in that aim the mission had been impossible from the start. On the other hand, the mission had realised its aims of making contact with the Allied leaders, discovering their plans, putting Australia’s case, and speeding up supplies and reinforcements. The air was cleared with Churchill and Roosevelt and a working relationship established. Evatt had discovered the Allied plans, even if he had not had them much altered; he had put Australia’s case vigorously, persistently and unambiguously; he had secured as many reinforcements as probably anyone could have done; and all this, despite (or perhaps because of) his rough edges. Politically, Evatt was seen to have been the man who bravely represented Australia in her hour of need. He was also fortunate that while he was away the US Navy fought and won two major naval actions against the Japanese — in the Coral Sea in May and, decisively, at Midway in June. Though Evatt had nothing to do with these victories, which brought important relief to Australia, his coincidental arrival from America at the right moment associated his mission with their afterglow.

Importantly for Curtin, the mission had not been so successful as to allow Evatt to threaten Curtin’s position as Prime Minister. Curtin had made sure Evatt was out of the country for three months while Curtin reaped the credit for putting things in order there. Curtin had been both close enough to the mission to benefit from its achievements while at the same time far enough away to distance himself from its inevitable failure on the main count.

The Second Mission, April to August 1943

Evatt’s second mission was undertaken in very different circumstances to those of his first. By February 1943, the tide was turning in the Pacific: the Allies had air and sea superiority and the Japanese were driven from Guadalcanal. Hopkins wrote to Casey as early as the previous December that in his view “the danger of invasion of Australia is almost nil”.44 As a consequence of these shifts the diplomatic
focus was moving to the shape of the post-war world. And in Australia the Curtin administration, still governing with the slenderest of majorities, was due to go to the polls before October. Whatever Evatt achieved this time it would need to contribute positively towards Labor's electoral strategies.

Evatt's instructions were similar to those he had had for the first mission. At the strategic level he was to make every effort to secure parity for the Pacific war, as against the Atlantic, in Allied strategy, despite the reaffirmation of “Beat Hitler First” at the Casablanca conference in January. As for supplies, he was to endeavour to speed up the flow of material already promised and to push for increased aircraft allocation for the RAAF to bring it up from thirty to seventy-two squadrons by 1944. It was hoped that these new aeroplanes would arrive in time for Australia to participate in the final assault on Japan and therefore justify her place at the peace table. Further they would be the best means for Australia to assert her power in the South-West Pacific region after the war. Interestingly Curtin saw fit on the eve of Evatt’s departure to assure the Australian press that Evatt was not being sent abroad permanently (to replace Sir Owen Dixon, who had succeeded Casey as Minister in Washington) in order to get Evatt out of Curtin’s hair before the election, as some of them had speculated.

Evatt was still up to his old tricks. Keen to claim full kudos for any reinforcements to Australia, he approached John Minter, First Secretary at the US legation, before leaving Canberra to have the State Department delay the announcement of new aircraft already secured for MacArthur’s command by a recent American mission to Washington until after Evatt’s arrival in the United States. By this tactic he planned to claim credit for them with the Australian public. On this occasion the Americans did not oblige.

True to form, Evatt alternately blustered, cajoled and threatened, trying every means and method to make and win his case. Marshall complained that he “pounded us with propaganda and personal pressures” and even Roosevelt, who was not usually so candid, was later to complain of his “crudeness and rudeness”. As before, Evatt began with a vain appeal directly to the American public, setting out his ambit claim. Unmoved, Roosevelt told Evatt that the aircraft cupboard was bare. Evatt was informed that he would have to wait on the results of the next round of Roosevelt–Churchill talks set down for Washington
in May, code-named Trident. Aware of Evatt’s tendency to tread on toes and not wanting any major embarrassment so close to the Australian elections, Curtin hastened to advise Evatt to stay clear of these high-level talks and “to fish for a request … rather than to waken disfavour by forcible intrusion”. This is not to say that Evatt’s actual demands were too difficult to meet. In fact he had now made it virtually impossible for the Allied leaders to refuse him by not asking for aeroplanes of any specific type or on any set time-table. Obviously he was fishing for a “political” trophy for the election rather than real hardware for the war. And this was noticed immediately by the American chiefs of staff. “Planes for votes”, “‘political’ planes”, sneered the president’s personal representative on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, US Fleet Admiral William D. Leahy.

Nevertheless, this was language that the master politicians Churchill and Roosevelt understood. A few weeks later, when Churchill put in a word in Evatt’s favour, Roosevelt overrode his chiefs of staff, who could see no military justification for giving the Australians any more aircraft, and “for political reasons” informed Evatt that he could now see his way to supplying 475 planes of unspecified make to Australia by the end of 1944. This was one more plane than Evatt had asked for and Roosevelt quipped that the extra one was for Evatt to fly back home in before he asked for even more. Of course, as Churchill no doubt pointed out to him, the president had bought political goodwill for virtually nothing, since nobody else wanted the planes. In the event, only 132 of the planes were ever delivered, and all of them were obsolescent types not needed for the war, most notoriously the Vultee Vengeance divebomber. The RAAF was unimpressed, concluding that:

> the allotments are quite unrelated to the building up of an efficient force … [but rather] to the disposal of aircraft … of types the manufacture of which is being discontinued … [T]he formation of squadrons of that type … would be madness and a waste of valuable manpower … although perhaps meeting the word of the President’s undertaking … it is directly opposed to the spirit.

However, Evatt, who was more interested in reportable promises than in actual planes, was cock-a-hoop and cabled to his Prime Minister: “I cannot tell you how relieved and proud I am to inform you that I have discharged the sole mission entrusted to me by you in relation to aircraft”. 
As usual Evatt lost no time in trying to claim public credit for his success. He asked Curtin to make an announcement, had Robinson send a back-up cable singing his praises and primed External Affairs to brief newspaper editors confidentially that "something big has been done for Australia". But Curtin, who had other, bigger fish to fry, suppressed the news until he could use it to the general party advantage rather than just for Evatt's. When a "No Confidence" motion was moved in the House eleven days later, Curtin made great play of Evatt's securing the aeroplanes necessary to make Australia safe from any future invasion, and the motion was defeated. Heading into a federal election in which his trump card was to be that Labor had saved Australia in 1942 while the conservatives had placed it in hazard in 1940 and 1941, Curtin could not have had more timely political ammunition. That the planes would ultimately prove useless militarily was irrelevant to Labor's needs.

As for grand strategy, Churchill and Roosevelt now had sufficient military strength to begin in earnest the task of rolling back the Japanese. At Trident they decided to declare that it was now time to fight the war against Japan with "the same vigour" as the one against Germany. This was done with some fanfare in order to appease the powerful pro-Pacific lobby in the US Navy. But what had really prompted the Allied leaders most was their increasing military might. As Evatt reported of the south-west Pacific theatre on 12 June 1943: the Allies now had nearly fifteen divisions to Japan's eleven, and much greater potential in reserves; they had naval parity; and they had a considerable air superiority, which, by the end of the year would be three-to-one. Thus sheer strength was the real basis for the new strategic dispensation.

What is apparent is that the decision was made without any contribution from Evatt, as he was not consulted either personally or as a member of the Pacific War Council which did not meet to consider the issue. Nor did Evatt try to involve himself, having been warned off by Curtin. Be all this as it may, Evatt and Curtin still claimed this as a victory won by means of Australian pressure, and, for domestic consumption, drastically overstated the meaning of the decision to boot.

As early as 4 June, Curtin told the press that the decision "brought to Australia one of the greatest successes of the war ... It had absolutely and completely supported the [strategical] contentions of the Austra-
lian Government.” This was despite the fact that Evatt had told Curtin more than once that the decision signified no alteration of “Beat Hitler First”. Evatt’s cables were never made public, nor was Curtin contradicted from Britain or the United States. Clearly this time Churchill and Roosevelt were happy to allow Curtin and Evatt to gain domestic political advantage from a misreading of the decision, provided they played ball internationally by not asking for real modifications of strategy or for real distortions of the pattern of supplies. At home Curtin’s and Evatt’s claims to a victory in changing Allied strategy were hardly contradicted, though as they and the Allied leaders knew full well “equal vigour” did not mean “equal strength”. It never did while the war lasted.

In London in June, Evatt was once again treated royally, even if Churchill privately found the task somewhat annoying. As Captain Gerald Wilkinson, the British liaison officer with MacArthur and in London at the time, observed in his diary, Churchill and Bracken did:

a great deal to educate and mellow this parochial, restless, rude, ambitious, indefatigable and by no means unintelligent creature whose brain and energy one cannot help respecting and to some extent liking, in spite of his drab appearance, dreary droning voice with its nasal [sic] whine; and his unattractive personality.

As a result of this, and of the lessons he had learnt by now about the best way to approach the British and American leaders, Evatt was much more subdued than previously and on his departure simply asked Churchill to “tell me soon what I can put in my kit for Australia”. Whereupon Churchill obliged amicably with two more squadrons of Spitfires — another concession which was a high profile political trophy but too small to be of real military significance.

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In Australia, Curtin had called the federal election for 21 August. Back in Sydney in early August, Evatt lost no time in mounting the hustings to bruit his successes, imaginary and otherwise. “Beat Hitler First” had been modified. There was a new offensive strategy for the Pacific. He had won “the green light” for the defeat of Tojo. He had been promised a new air force which would help crush the Japanese and then supply the power for Australia to assume “industrial leadership” in the south-west Pacific and to police the region as a bastion of security.

The election proved to be one of the biggest landslide victories in
Australian history with Labor winning forty-nine seats in the seventy-five member Lower House and assuming control of the Senate as well. Many things contributed to the result, but perhaps the most important factor was Curtin’s convincing image and record over the past twenty months as the man who had “saved” Australia; and by his efforts abroad Evatt had contributed some of the brightest stones for the construction of the saintly mosaic of the Curtin icon. What is more, Curtin had managed to win while keeping his younger rival at arm’s length. As Curtin told a confidential press conference in June: “Sir Keith Murdoch [proprietor of the highly influential Melbourne Herald] was very disappointed that he could not find a leader [for a National Government] — even from our camp. He had hopes of me for a while and then Evatt — but Evatt made two trips to the USA and was not accessible.”

Evatt was never to attain the heights of political skill of his leader John Curtin who was able to distance himself from Evatt’s excesses while cashing in on his successes. Curtin used Evatt in the same way as Attlee, a later British Prime Minister, used his outspoken foreign minister, Ernest Bevin. As Attlee put it, “If you have a good dog don’t bark yourself”. However, like Attlee and Bevin, Curtin and Evatt proved to be an effective political partnership.

Conclusion

It is wrong, as some historians have done, to adjudge Evatt’s missions abroad to be overall failures, or even counter-productive, because they were militarily relatively ineffectual and because they were unsuccessful in the impossible task of trying to persuade Roosevelt and Churchill to alter a sound grand strategy. This judgment overlooks the fact that the missions were undertaken with several other objectives in view which were more fully realised. The missions were intended to help make Australia’s voice heard internationally — and it was. Evatt was charged with the job of obtaining supplies — and he did his best and obtained some improvement. But perhaps their most important aim was to give a strong impression to the home electorate that the new Labor government was forcefully and with some success pressing Australia’s case abroad, as their predecessors seemed not to have done (though this was more because Menzies preferred quiet diplomacy and
because the war situation was different than because of real political differences).68

Seen in terms of their effect on the home constituency, both for Evatt personally and for his party, the missions were highly successful, undoubtedly contributing to the legend of the Australian Labor David standing up to the Allied leaders Goliath that was so effectively used in the 1943 election campaign. Evatt’s role in the conscious creation of this legend showed considerable political skill and a capacity to learn from the mistakes of his first mission. This was most evident in the way he was able by the middle of the second mission to ask the Allied leaders for just what they were easily capable of giving and just what it was necessary for them to give politically. Politics is the art of the possible. Failing to achieve the impossible internationally, Evatt helped Curtin to win the possible at home.
It is a popular belief that John Curtin pulled Australia into the American camp with his New Year’s message of December 1941 when he turned to the United States “without any inhibitions of any kind” and “free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom”.¹ Any more than a cursory look at Australia’s external relations post-1941 demonstrates that this is a misconception. By 1945, Australia was desperately seeking to resurrect the pre-war Imperial relationship, albeit with a stronger and more independent role for herself within that relationship.

Despite this, a considerable number of column inches in academic journals have been taken up with the question of identifying either the point at which Australia switched sides, from Britain to the United States, or the point at which Australia began to assert a distinctive Australian foreign policy. It is the argument of this paper that this debate is rather fruitless as it is predicated upon the assumption that Australian foreign policy is either tied to Britain or the United States, or is independent of both of them. A more complex picture is closer to the truth, with Australia continually pursuing simultaneous aims of developing close relations with Britain and the United States while also pursuing interests that remain distinctively Australian.

Whichever government is in power in Canberra, it is possible to discern this three-pronged approach to foreign policy. Only the weight given to the particular prongs changes over time. Thus, Bob Menzies’ first government in 1939 was marked by a close identification with British Imperial interests but was also notable for Menzies’ sometimes half-hearted efforts to build diplomatic bridges across the Pacific to the United States. At the same time, it is possible to discover significant instances where Menzies pursued policies that were distinctively Australian. Two in particular were his efforts to develop an automobile
industry in Australia and his efforts to find a peaceful compromise in
the Pacific that might avoid a disastrous war with Japan. Although these
policies looked distinctively Australian from Whitehall’s viewpoint, it
is also true that they were pursued by Menzies in the belief that they
were not antagonistic to the interests of the Empire as he defined them.

Similarly, with Curtin it is possible to cite instances where his
government pursued the various directions handed on by his predeces­
sor. Only the emphasis changed. Thus, we have his New Year’s article
and the appointment of MacArthur, both of which seemed to suggest
that Australia had firmly switched camps, from Britain to the United
States. However, there is ample evidence to show that, during this
period of close association with Washington, Curtin remained con­
vinced that Australia’s postwar destiny lay mainly with Britain. At the
same time, the events of the war also allowed the Dominion to pursue
distinctive Australian interests to an extent that had not previously been
possible. In particular, the years 1943–45 saw a fairly sustained attempt
to define the Southwest Pacific region as an area of predominant
Australian interest.

By the beginning of 1943, it was fairly clear that Australia was safe
from a Japanese invasion. The Japanese attack on Port Moresby had
been repulsed during the battle for the Coral Sea in May 1942 and later
by the battle for the Kokoda Trail. Japan’s ability to mount an invasion
of the Australian mainland had been all but destroyed by the battle for
Midway Island in June 1942. The Dominion was no longer on Japan’s
list of short-term conquests, although Japan still aimed to isolate
Australia from the United States and prevent her becoming a spring­
board for an American attack. Australia’s self-confidence was boosted
by the return of most of her troops from overseas, particularly the three
Middle East divisions, and the presence of some 100,000 American
service personnel. Before the war, Australia had skeletal defence
services incapable of defending her shores from serious attack. Now
Australia’s defences bristled with modern armour, much of it Aus­
tralian-made, while her streets were crowded with the reassuring
colour of khaki-clad soldiers.

Australia looked to the future with renewed self- confidence, albeit
tinged with the nagging feeling that she had a limited time in which to
correct her defence deficiencies before another and more potent threat
arose. Because of the events of 1941–42, there was a reassessment of
the Dominion's relationship with mother Britain and a realisation that reliance for Australia's defence could no longer be placed in Britain alone. As Evatt's businessman adviser, W.S. Robinson, observed in early 1943, "the British Empire of the pre-war days no longer exists — and never will exist again".2

But Australia did not simply swoon into the arms of the Americans. While thankful for American assistance, Australia realised that the Americans could be fickle friends, that they had their own interests to pursue that were not necessarily consonant with Australia's. As Curtin remarked in his rambling way to a group of journalists on 30 December 1942, it was no good for Australia to look to a great power for her salvation and that her plight earlier that year had been 'the proper fate of any country which did not build its own defences ... [and] was also the proper fate for a country that thought it could fight anybody's war before it made its own position safe'.3 This second New Year's message has been ignored by historians but marks a substantial change of emphasis from the message of the previous year.

In this end of year talk with journalists, Curtin complained of the way in which Churchill and Roosevelt "played ball with one another, quite regardless of the world at large". Curtin was convinced that they had made their minds up that if the British Empire in the Far East "had to go then it had to go". According to this logic, Australia could not rely on either great power but had to buttress whatever guarantees she could get from them with a more self-reliant defence policy. As part of this quasi-independent stance, Curtin proclaimed at this same meeting with journalists that Roosevelt's proposed choice of a new US Minister in Canberra would be rejected. "I'm not having him," Curtin was quoted as saying. This bravado was short-lived. Within two days, Curtin was forced to back down after being advised that Roosevelt would be "deeply offended" by Australia's refusal.4

Despite this backdown, and the continuing dependence upon the United States, there was a determined push during the latter half of the war towards developing the basis for a post-war political environment in the southwest Pacific in which Australia, and to a lesser extent New Zealand, would have a predominant voice. There were no illusions that Australia could stand alone in the Pacific but a belief that, with a strong British and American presence restricted to the northern Pacific and the Indian Ocean, Australia would be able to hold sway over the
territories within her immediate region. These territories meant different things to different people at different times. But, in more grandiose moments, they included the Netherlands East Indies and stretched as far north as Indochina and Malaya and to the Solomons and Noumea in the east.

Control was to be exercised over these territories by means of terror from the air, much in the same way as the Royal Air Force exercised an economical form of control over British territories in the Middle East during the 1930s. Such control from the air would marry well with the Labor Party’s pre-war emphasis on air power rather than sea power as being the basis of Australian defence policy. It also had the advantage of retaining the considerable resources devoted to aircraft manufacture during the war. It was a dream of Australian wartime governments that the Dominion would emerge with an aircraft manufacturing industry at the end of the war that could be partly retained and partly converted to the production of automobiles.

It was for these reasons that the Labor government pressed ahead with a large-scale aircraft production scheme in 1944 and 1945 in full knowledge that no aircraft were likely to be produced in time for use in the war. The aim was to produce four-engined Lancaster bombers with sufficient range to cover under an Australian umbrella all that territory lying within an arc drawn from Darwin and stretching from Singapore to the Solomons. Such a plan would also place Australia at the forefront of new technology and industrial innovation. Of course, while Britain was prepared to see Australia develop an aircraft manufacturing industry after the war, it was not prepared to transfer the research and development sections of its own industry to Australia. If the Dominion insisted upon producing planes, it could produce models designed and tested in Britain.

If the manufacture of aircraft was to provide the means of holding together a postwar sub-empire in the Pacific, what was the purpose? The first purpose was for defence. It was believed that Australia’s predicament in 1941–42 was largely due to a failure by the colonial powers to fortify and defend adequately their possessions in the Pacific. As a result of this collective failure, Japan was able to march almost unopposed to the very shores of Australia — past the Americans in the Philippines, the French in Indochina, the British in Malaya, the Dutch in the East Indies and the Portuguese in East Timor. As W.S. Robinson
advised Evatt in June 1943, Australia's future survival "depends more on strength in the air than on any other factor. A thousand million coloured people are her nearest neighbours — but a few hours flight from our shores." So the idea of forward defence took hold of the Australian imagination and moves were begun to block the return of the colonial powers to their former territories.

Australian leaders also remembered with chagrin the difficulties the Dominion had experienced in extracting aircraft from Britain and America in the late 1930s. An Australian aircraft industry would give her a greater measure of security in the event of another world crisis. As W.S. Robinson reminded Evatt, the most important lesson that Australia had to learn from the war was that it "cannot rely on others to make and sell us aircraft when they are in danger themselves". This would have been self-evident in most other countries. But Australia's imperial blinkers often impeded it from seeing the obvious.

Allied to the idea of defence, was the notion that these territories offered opportunities for economic development. "It is not too much to say," predicted Robinson, "that the areas of Australia's geographical markets after the war which it will be necessary to cover by air will be twice as large as the Continent of Australia is today". Australian businessmen looked at New Guinea and saw reflected the glint of gold and the possibility of oil reserves. Robinson pointed to the "vast oil reserves in New Guinea", arguing that Australia must claim them as its own in order to fuel the large air force as well as the civil air system that he envisaged as radiating out from the island continent.

The territories of the southwest Pacific were seen as a new frontier for Australia, a place where Australian manhood, made virile by the blood of battle, could be turned loose to do battle against mother nature and civilise the jungle of New Guinea rather than return to the dole queues of the prewar period. They looked at the colonial territories of Asia and saw undeveloped markets beckoning for Australian produce and manufactured goods. And there was an over-confident belief that aircraft would provide much of the carrying capacity for this trade just as they dominated the wartime traffic to these areas. According to Robinson, the "maintenance of our economic activities" would depend upon having "efficient aircraft in sufficient supply — we must be able to build them and we must have trained men to fly them".5

Evatt took Robinson's advice to heart. During a trip to Washington
and London in June 1943, Evatt pushed hard for Australia to be supplied with sufficient aircraft to allow for the doubling in size of the RAAF. He was particularly concerned to obtain heavy bombers, a type of aircraft denied to Australia but which Evatt saw as necessary to establish the long-range striking power of the RAAF. Bearing in mind that the threat of invasion had evaporated and that the American air force had relegated the RAAF to a minor supportive role, it seems clear that Evatt was thinking very much in postwar terms, particularly since most of the aircraft to be supplied would not be delivered until the end of 1944. As Curtin assured a gathering of journalists when relating news of the aircraft Evatt had secured, the planes "will be Australia's property and will remain with Australia after the war." 

It is also true that Evatt had political calculations in mind. An Australian election was imminent and there were considerable kudos to be earned from securing the supply of high-profile defence equipment. But his other activities in the United States indicate that Evatt had taken Robinson's advice on board, prompting him to stake a postwar claim to Portuguese Timor and to announce Australia's desire to be involved in a "partnership" with the Dutch in the postwar development of the East Indies.

Upon his return to Australia, and just nineteen days prior to the 1943 federal election, Evatt was able to proclaim in a national radio broadcast that Australia had a secure and prosperous future based upon the development of a local aviation industry. Such an industry would provide the Dominion with "industrial leadership in the Southwest Pacific, where there was already a population of 130 millions". According to Evatt, the war with Japan had done Australia a favour, making the "lazy, peaceful islands in the Pacific ... acquainted with the latest aircraft, with the means of mechanised warfare, and the products of industrial production. Demands have been created, markets have been made possible, and Australia has the machinery and resources to supply the demand." With Evatt's help, the Labor Party romped home at the election, winning majorities in both houses of parliament.

While Evatt was extolling to the Australian electorate the dominating role that their country would enjoy in the Southwest Pacific, W.S. Robinson was making a similar pitch to the British government. In a memorandum sent to several sympathetic British ministers, Robinson
again pointed to Australia’s geographic isolation and her proximity to the “1,100,000,000 of the coloured races lying above Australia”. He predicted that Australia would have to create a defence perimeter in an arc from northern Australia covering Singapore, the Netherlands East Indies, New Guinea and associated islands. A similar arc would stretch north from New Zealand to cover the scattered islands of the central south Pacific. According to Robinson, these were the no-go areas “in which we cannot afford to permit those opposed to our ideals of life and to our ways of living to establish himself in the air. These are also the areas to which Australia and New Zealand must have free economic access if not economic direction and in the Government and control of which they must have a definite voice.”

In an effort calculated to excite the imagination of British ministers, Robinson conjured up a rich vision of undeveloped territories abundant with “tropical products, plus oil, timber, water power, minerals and metals” that would “provide opportunities for the enterprising Australian which he has not had for more than a generation”. Robinson was realistic enough to acknowledge that Australia could not develop these territories by itself and called for a combined British, American and Australian effort to exploit the resources of the region in such a way that it would “attract the millions of white people we so urgently require”. The key to success of the scheme would be supremacy in the air, with Robinson calling for the “White Races” to combine their aeronautical resources to ensure the “safety of the world”. Within six months, Evatt would enshrine Robinson’s agenda within the Australia-New Zealand Agreement of January 1944, by which he attempted to extend the boundaries of Australia’s existing miniature empire to encompass the adjacent, resource-rich territories of the region behind an Anglo-American defence barrier stretched across the Equator.

Although it has been suggested that the Anzac Agreement was a unilateral initiative by Evatt, there is ample evidence that it was in accordance with ideas shared with Curtin, despite the fact that Curtin later disclaimed any responsibility for it after strenuous objections by the Americans. Curtin’s proposal of late 1943 for a British fraternity of equal members meeting regularly in alternating capitals of the Commonwealth was a precursor of the Anzac Agreement. As he informed a party of visiting British journalists, the Dominion was “entitled to make it plain to everybody that Australia had grown up to
the stature of full manhood”. As equal members of the Commonwealth, Curtin wanted Australians to be regarded in London as “British people holding a great bastion for the Empire”.11

In Curtin’s view, as in Evatt’s, this bastion would not be restricted to the island continent but would include the adjacent territories of the Southwest Pacific. In a confidential briefing to Australian journalists in September 1943, Curtin had advised that he intended to expand the Department of External Affairs as it “would be necessary to appoint men to go into the islands after the Japanese had been driven out to watch Australia’s economic and commercial interests”. He asked the press to treat these moves sympathetically, warning that “some of the men appointed would have no apparent diplomatic claims but would be really ‘economic bandits’ who would fight the go-getting American commercial interests on Australia’s behalf”. Curtin predicted that the postwar world would see a fierce economic war in which Australia could not “allow her economic position to be not known or misunderstood with a Pacific studded by bases occupied by half a dozen nations shut out behind tariff walls”.12

But already there were problems looming as Australia tried to reconcile its ambitions with her abilities to realise them. As the Americans and British demanded greater supplies of foodstuffs from Australia, a cleavage opened within the Australian government between those wanting to be grocers for the Allies and those, led by Evatt, who wanted to maintain a high profile military effort in the Pacific. While Evatt argued that Australia could not afford to lose contact with the islands to the north of Australia, his colleagues were more concerned with retaining their historic trading links with Britain and hungrily gobbling up any increasing trade opportunities on offer.13 Curtin fell in with the majority, admitting to Churchill on 8 October 1943 that Australia had “overreached” herself and would have to trim its manpower commitments to align more closely with her manpower resources.14 Supplies to the Americans fighting in the Pacific would be cut back in order to increase the supply of foodstuffs to Britain. As Curtin admitted to MacArthur at the end of November, the primary reason for the realignment of the Australian war effort was the need to maintain a hold over “markets which would be important to the Australian export trade in the post-war period”.15

Despite the problems of manpower, Evatt pressed ahead with his
vision of a sub-empire. In a speech to the Australian parliament in mid-October 1943, Evatt claimed that the region adjacent to Australia must be regarded as "a great zone of mutual interest which had to be grouped in the same defence area after the war, and be the subject of special efforts for economic betterment and aviation development". This was almost a straight lift from Robinson's memoranda. Evatt continued in the same vein, proclaiming that "Australia's predominant interests lay in the Pacific, where Australia had a leading part to play". Sweeping his pudgy hand through an arc across the Southwest Pacific, Evatt stabbed out a challenge to the colonial powers who had previously controlled the region, pointing out that, from the point of defence, trade and transport, most of these colonial territories "could fairly be described as coming within an Australian zone".16

Evatt's attempt to supplement this geographic relationship between Australia and the adjacent colonial territories with an economic, military and political one was almost immediately threatened by a meeting in Cairo between Roosevelt and Churchill during which the British Prime Minister pressured Roosevelt to accept that the European empires would have their Pacific territories restored to them after the war. Moreover, a public communique at the conclusion of the conference proclaimed that they "covet no gain for themselves and have no thought of territorial expansion".17 It was at least partly to rebut this declaration that Evatt moved quickly to assert Australian interests in the Pacific.

Once again, it is necessary to repeat that, in concluding the Australian–New Zealand Agreement, Evatt was acting in accord with a widely-accepted trend of thought within the Labor Party. This prescribed a more independent foreign policy for Australia, safe behind an Anglo-American security screen. As Curtin reminded the Labor Party conference in December 1943, in an effort to rein in the foreign policy cowboys, there still remained "teeming millions of coloured races to the north of Australia" which meant that the Dominion still needed to be "harnessed to other nations". In the context of such alliances, according to Curtin, Australia could establish her "pre-eminent position to speak with authority on the problems of the Pacific and have a primary interest in their solution".18 It was in order to establish such a pre-eminent position that Evatt drew up the Australian–New
Zealand Agreement that was signed by the contracting parties with due solemnity in Canberra on 21 January 1944.

The Anzac Agreement was a brave attempt by these two Pacific dominions to prevent themselves being passed over by any Pacific settlement. In a direct challenge to the Cairo declaration, the Anzac Agreement stipulated that the disposal of enemy islands in the Pacific "should be effected only with their agreement and as part of a general Pacific settlement". And those island bases developed by the United States, such as on Fiji and Manus Islands, would not be retained by the Americans. Other important elements in the agreement included the preservation of the "White Australia" policy and the demand that colonial territories be regarded as trustee territories open to international inspection, much in the same way as Australia administered the mandated territory of former German New Guinea. Evatt assured the British government that, in drawing up the agreement, he had been motivated by concern about "United States attempts at infiltration in non-American Pacific Islands south of the Equator" and by concern at the apparent British willingness to "concede too easily proposals made by the United States of America in relation to the Pacific".

This unilateral slap in the face of the great powers depended for its success upon the calling of an international conference on the Pacific which would settle the postwar shape of the region and acknowledge Australia's pre-eminence in the Southwest Pacific. Britain and the United States ensured that the conference did not happen. Neither nation wanted to be seen publicly dividing up conquered territories, whatever they might agree to do in private when meeting with Stalin or Chiang Kai-Shek. The ideals for which the war was being fought precluded such a deal being struck in the glare of the Movietone news cameras. But, as the British Dominions Secretary also pointed out to his colleagues, such a conference would threaten the prerogatives of the Great Powers in settling the peace. For this reason alone, the conference proposal had to be killed along with Australian hopes to establish her sub-empire. Deliberately misinterpreting the Australian bid for regional pre-eminence, Britain proclaimed as a "notable landmark" the offer by the Dominions to "share in defence responsibilities in the Pacific". While Australia was prepared to shoulder the defence responsibility, it also wanted the power that went with it. Britain and
the United States were determined that Australia would not have that power.

To Evatt’s chagrin, Curtin quickly backed down when faced with opposition from Washington, with the US Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, calling on Curtin to abandon plans to call a conference of Pacific powers. Without consulting Evatt, Curtin assured Hull that he “need have no disturbance of mind as it did not appear reasonable that there could be an early conference arising out of the Australian–New Zealand discussions”. Curtin then asked Evatt to compose a formal reply to the American message. In complying with Curtin’s instruction, Evatt defended the concept of a Pacific conference, denying that it would cause disunity among the Allies. He also reminded the Americans that Australia had not been consulted about the decisions taken at Cairo affecting the sovereignty of Pacific territories and that Roosevelt had not been averse to making unilateral declarations about the future of the Pacific. Although Evatt conceded that the conference should not be held until after the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference, scheduled for London in May, he remained insistent that the conference should still be held. This delay proved fatal. At the conference, and during talks with Roosevelt en route, Curtin distanced himself from the call for a Pacific conference, confiding to Roosevelt that the Anzac Agreement had been an Evatt initiative drawn up “in what may well prove to be an excess of enthusiasm’ to try and secure the ‘future of the white man in the Pacific’.”

The Anzac Agreement marked the high point of Australia’s search for a sub-empire in the South Pacific. But, even as it was being drawn up, its basis was being attacked by the Australian Army leader, General Blamey, who disparaged the strategy of forward defence as being beyond the resources of the Australian Army. In doing this, Blamey was taking issue with the conclusions of the Australian Defence Committee which had recommended that the “best means of securing Australia from invasion is by taking strong offensive action from established and well-defended forward bases” which were to be established in an arc from Java through Timor and the Solomons to New Caledonia and Fiji. This was the military counterpart to the grand imperial plan of Evatt and Robinson.

However, as Blamey observed, Australian garrisons on Pacific islands would be subject to the same leap-frogging tactics employed
by the Americans against the Japanese, with 100,000 Japanese troops contained and by-passed at Rabaul. According to Blamey, Australia had only one viable option:

Having regard to the limited national income and other resources, it is obvious that Australia should seek its protection by a means which may be anticipated will stand the test of time, and will allow considerable development of strength and the continued recognition of our place as a member of the British Empire. This envisages a closer alignment of common interests in the Empire than ever before in our history. This aspect is so paramount as to require no further elaboration.

Blamey urged that the Dutch should be “wholeheartedly” supported in retrieving the East Indies which, although of vital interest to Australia, was “beyond the capacity of Australia to exert any direct influence”.

Although Blamey’s advice was not heeded immediately, it could not long be ignored due to the growing problem of adjusting Australia’s limited manpower supply to the burgeoning demands being placed upon it. This, more than anything, gradually brought home to Evatt the gaping chasm between dream and reality and the enormous political and economic costs that would have to be incurred for that gap to be bridged. Housing returned servicemen might have to be abandoned in favour of maintaining this postwar army at its island fortresses. Once the choice became as stark as this, the outcome was inevitable. The push for defence self-reliance receded in importance in the strategic mix that made up Australia’s external policy. So the concept of a separate Australian sub-empire crumbled under the combined impact of great power opposition and harsh domestic reality.

One of these realities was brought home very forcefully to the Australian government within weeks of the Anzac Agreement being concluded. In February 1944, when the Japanese moved a fleet of seven battleships and two aircraft carriers to Singapore in a defensive move calculated to remove it from the powerful reach of the American navy and air force, the Australian government took fright at the possible ramifications for the Dominion’s security. Western Australia, Curtin’s home state, was particularly exposed to any attack that the Japanese might care to launch. Fortunately for the Western Australians, the Japanese had other things in mind although a mistaken report of the Japanese ships heading southward put Perth’s defenders on their mettle. As a visiting British intelligence officer observed, the city was wide
open for attack. Although eighty-six aircraft were sent from eastern Australia to reinforce the defenders, only twenty-three had arrived within two days.24 This panic would have driven home the point that Blamey had tried to make in January — that Australia would have enough trouble defending its own territory and could not afford to entertain the grandiose dream of throwing a defensive mantle over the surrounding region.

When Curtin travelled to Washington and London in May 1944, his primary purpose was not to resuscitate the Anzac Agreement as a Monroe Doctrine of the Southwest Pacific but to obtain Allied agreement to the partial demobilisation of Australian forces. Although officially abandoned by Curtin during his trip, the search for regional power lived on to a certain extent in Evatt’s successful push for colonial trusteeship which gave Australia a limited voice, via the United Nations, in the administration of the colonial territories within Australia’s region. The South Pacific Forum also remains as a legacy of that wartime policy.

The Anzac Agreement, then, should not be seen as a confidence trick played by Evatt on conference delegates too tired to notice its significance. Despite Curtin’s attempts to distance himself from the agreement and thereby side-step the criticism from London and Washington, the agreement was in line with the statements of policy of both Curtin and Evatt during 1943. In that sense, the agreement was not an aberration in the Dominion’s external outlook, but the logical outcome of policy choices made during the preceding year. It marked the peak of attempts by Evatt to have Australia acknowledged as the predominant nation within its region and to establish the means of controlling the destiny of that region. By October 1944, W.S. Robinson reported to Evatt from New York on his efforts to achieve for Australia “freedom of access and equality of economic opportunity in the New Hebrides, New Guinea, Timor, N[etherlands]. E[ast]. I[ndies], Tonkin [Indochina] etc”.25 Such access was to be achieved by the trusteeship arrangements that Evatt was trying to have imposed on the colonial powers. This was a substantial retreat from earlier talk of direct Australian control of these territories.

At the end of October 1944, Evatt reinforced the message of the Anzac Agreement when the two countries met once more, this time in Wellington, to carry forward their bid for a seat at the Pacific peace
table, to reassert their determination to restrict the American presence to the north Pacific and to renew their call for colonial territories to be administered on a trusteeship basis. But this meeting was a hollow echo of the international gathering that Evatt had desired. Both Britain and the United States again took umbrage at the unilateral action of the upstart Dominions, particularly after Curtin had indicated while in London that he would not press ahead with Australia's call for a widening of the mandate system to include all colonies.\textsuperscript{26}

During the San Francisco conference that established the United Nations in April and May of 1945, Evatt's trusteeship proposal was watered down to allow for American strategic colonies to be created in the Pacific and for a trusteeship council to be established with powers of inspection but no power to overrule the control of the Imperial power. Nevertheless, it could be argued that Evatt had helped to light a fuse at San Francisco that eventually helped lead to the decolonisation of the subsequent decades. Certainly, he angered the British Dominions Secretary, Lord Cranborne, who reacted with relief at being thrown out of office by the electors of Britain since it would mean that he no longer had to deal with Dr Evatt, although he admitted that Evatt was "only a particularly repulsive representative of a not at all uncommon point of view in his own and the other Empire countries".\textsuperscript{27}

When it came to conclude the Japanese surrender, Evatt's views were brushed aside by Allies anxious for a quick peace before Russian forces were able to lay the basis for a significant claim to the spoils. Even the British had limited sway in influencing the final outcome of a war that the Americans had long regarded as being their own. Evatt was forced to take what solace he could from Australia being accorded the command of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. This in itself was symbolic, since the command was accepted in preference to an earlier proposal that a separate Australian occupation force be sent to Japan. This decision signalled the declining vigour of Australia's push for a more independent regional role and indicated a re-emphasis on the traditional linkages with Britain and the Commonwealth.

As Curtin asserted during a major speech in February 1945 on Australia's postwar defence and security policy, the Dominion's foreign policy "must always be in harmony with that of the British Commonwealth as a whole". Using words reminiscent of pre-war conservative governments, Curtin set out Australia's role as being to
"give advice, to state its view, now and again to criticise, and to make suggestions which, in its view, would strengthen the family relationship. This we have done, remembering always that our articulation in the world would be more impressive as a member of a family than it could ever be if we made it as a separate and distinct entity." Curtin claimed that there was "no abatement of the sovereignty of this country in making that statement".28

The attempted creation of a sub-empire had been a short-lived affair made possible by the apparent availability of military forces that seemed sufficient to step into the power vacuum left by the retreating Imperial powers. But the Australian forces soon proved less tangible than had at first appeared while the Imperial powers, including the United States, proved less tractable about Australian regional ambitions than Evatt and others had hoped. Evatt had tried to create a place for Australia at the table of the world powers but had, instead, been forced to learn a harsh lesson in international politics.
The victors of the 1939–1945 European war gathered at the Luxembourg Palace in Paris in the summer of 1946 for the first of the conferences that were to decide the peace. The conference was opened by a lengthy speech by the French Prime Minister, M. Bidault, who spoke for everyone when he said that the framers of the peace had a high responsibility to ensure that this peace had a longer and more secure life than the peace made in Paris just twenty-seven years before. After concluding his formal speech Bidault began to suggest the procedures that the Conference could adopt. At once, a solid figure of a man in an untidy suit rose from his seat immediately in front of the main rostrum, walked forward and began speaking inaudibly from the floor of the Chamber. Invited to the microphone-fitted rostrum he spoke, at first slowly and quietly, and then more firmly, challenging the rules of procedure suggested by the Foreign Ministers of the four great powers. He made a strong plea for the conference to adopt democratic procedures and for the right of the smaller belligerents to have a full part in drawing up the peace treaties.1

The man whose intervention the Sydney Morning Herald reported as having “turned the proceedings in a couple of minutes from a dignified ceremonidal into a real event” was Dr Herbert Vere Evatt, the Australian Minister for External Affairs.2 His intervention recalled the performance at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 of the Australian Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, known as “the little digger” who stood up to the leaders of the Great Powers over the peace settlement of the war to end all wars. Hughes fought for the right to participate in the peace process, he argued over the contents of the European peace treaties, he battled over the disposal of the defeated enemies’ colonies
and he sought to influence the future strategic position of Japan. He had more successes than failures.\(^3\) Twenty-seven years later, Evatt, another Australian of formidable presence and nerve, led the Australian delegation to another Paris peace conference to consider the peace treaties for Italy and the other Axis satellites. He faced many of the same battles that Hughes had faced, but the times were different, as was the roll-call of the victors.

As with Hughes, the first problem Evatt faced was to secure participation in the peace process itself, to obtain for Australia a place of its own at the European peace table. Australia had made a significant contribution to the Allied victory in World War II, but it was a minor power, with the still confusing status, to non-British nations, of that of a British Dominion. The Big Three — the Soviet Union, the United States of America and the United Kingdom — had won the war and were determined to decide the peace. During the war, successive Australian governments had little success in influencing Allied strategy and the Chifley government faced similar problems in shaping the peace treaties. Evatt set out to break down the Great Power stranglehold over the peace process.\(^4\)

Australia's main interests lay in the Pacific with the Japanese peace settlement. This was the overarching factor that shaped Evatt's policy towards the European peace settlements. It must always be kept in mind that for Evatt, for the Chifley government, and for the Australian people, the first priority was a Pacific settlement that would prevent Japan from again emerging as a major Pacific power with the ability to thrust southwards to Australia's northern shores. Although the focus of this chapter is on the European settlement, there were always greater battles raging simultaneously over the procedures and substance of the Japanese peace settlement.\(^5\) The problems associated with the Pacific settlement influenced Evatt's policy and actions towards Europe. Not only did Evatt believe that the Australian contribution to the victory in Europe and north Africa had earned it the right to participate as a principal party in the European settlement, but Australia also had substantive strategic and economic interests at stake. Again it seemed during those early post-war years that the procedures adopted for the European peace process would most likely set a precedent for the Japanese peace settlement that seemed bound to follow. If Evatt could break the monopoly of the Big Three over the European settlement, it
would make the Australian task of securing its Pacific interests much easier as its interests there were much more direct and obvious. Long before the war ended, Evatt and his officials were planning for the peace.

During the war, Australia had been excluded from the great wartime conferences at Cairo, Tehran and Yalta. Churchill expressed his attitude on the participation of the smaller powers in the peace process to Roosevelt and Stalin in verse: "The eagle should permit the small birds to sing and care not wherefore they sang." Churchill was prepared to give the lesser belligerents the facade of active participation, but he accepted that the final decisions would continue to be made by the Great Powers. Stalin was even more determined to ensure that the Great Powers monopolised the peace process. As a result, Australia was excluded from the preparation of the European armistice agreements. Accordingly, during the British Commonwealth consultative meetings held in London prior to the San Francisco conference in early April 1945, Evatt sought and received assurances from Churchill that he would support Australian and New Zealand claims to be included in the preparation of the Japanese surrender terms. In a cautionary note, Churchill's Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, pointed out that such matters were not a matter for the United Kingdom alone. The correctness of this proposition was soon to be rudely revealed during the Potsdam conference held in late July and early August 1945.

The Potsdam meeting between the Big Three established the machinery for determining the peace settlements and, as events moved rapidly, it also discussed the terms on which a Japanese surrender would be accepted. The Great Powers decided to constitute a Council of Foreign Ministers, consisting of the three Great Powers plus France and China, to draw up the initial peace treaties with Italy and the other Axis states, to be followed by the peace treaty with Germany if a suitable German government emerged. During the meeting, the Great Powers issued the Potsdam declaration, which, among other things, publicly set out the surrender terms that the Allies were prepared to offer the Japanese government. It was obvious to Evatt and the Chifley government that vital procedural and substantive decisions about the peace treaties were being made without either reference to, or participation by, Australia and the other smaller allies.

It was during the Potsdam meeting that the Attlee Labour govern-
ment swept to power. Immediately, Evatt, with the full support of the Chifley government, conducted a vigorous diplomatic and public campaign against the British government to win Australian representation on the Council of Foreign Ministers and secure participation in the Japanese peace process. In communications with the Attlee government, Evatt claimed the right of Australia to be party principal, not only in the planning of the Pacific peace settlement, but also in Europe. Membership of the Council of Foreign Ministers, he argued, was the only method by which Australia's rights could be exercised. In support of his case, Evatt cited Australia's war effort in Europe, the Middle East and the Pacific. He claimed that Lloyd George had given more effective recognition of the Dominions after World War I, and argued that the inclusion of China on the Council was both unjust and irrational.\textsuperscript{10} Australia also approached the United States, the Soviet Union, France and China with requests that it be admitted to the Council.\textsuperscript{11} The United Kingdom, as the weakest of the three Great Powers, had little room to manoeuvre and consequently did not have a free hand to give Evatt what he wanted. It was the United States and the Soviet Union that had demanded a Great Power peace, but this suited the British as well.

The Attlee government explained its position frankly. With respect to Europe there was, the British advised, little hope of Australian representation on the Council of Foreign Ministers, but it promised to provide Australia with the draft treaties. Furthermore, the British government promised to take Australia's views into account when discussions took place in the Council. When the Pacific was on the agenda the British were more confident that Australia, having a direct interest, would be able to participate in discussions.\textsuperscript{12} But Evatt and Chifley were not easily appeased. In a stormy month for Anglo-Australian relations, Evatt, backed by his government, used all possible methods of public and private diplomacy to move the Great Powers, but made little progress.

In early September, a major opportunity for Evatt to further Australia's participation in the peace process came when he was in London during the first Council of Foreign Ministers' meetings. The Attlee government had invited Dominion Prime Ministers to come to London to be on hand for consultation during these meetings, but the Prime Ministers sent representatives instead.\textsuperscript{13} Evatt represented Australia.
While the Pacific settlement remained the chief focus for Evatt’s diplomacy, he did not ignore Australia’s interests in the European settlement.

After an initial delay caused by illness, Evatt pressed his British colleagues to push for Australian membership of the Council, for he realised that all the important decisions would be made in that forum. Failing full membership, Evatt asked Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, to make him a special consultant to the British delegation so that he could, at least, have first hand knowledge of the meetings. Bevin would only agree to endeavour to secure the agreement of his fellow Foreign Ministers that the Dominions did have a direct interest in the Italian peace treaty and the disposal of the Italian colonies, and that Canada, Australia and New Zealand had a direct interest in Far Eastern issues, thereby ensuring that the Dominions would be associated with these discussions under the terms of the Potsdam agreement. In the Council, Bevin did press for Dominions to participate in the Council’s meetings when they had a direct interest, but with little success. The approach of the other Foreign Ministers, particularly Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, was to restrict proceedings to the five members of the Council.

The only occasion on which Evatt (and the representatives of other nations with a direct interest) was admitted to the Council meetings was to make a statement on the Italian–Yugoslav border on 18 September. He used this token appearance to state his case for broadening the Council’s membership to include the other major belligerents, but his appearance failed to move Council members. To bolster his efforts to broaden membership of the peace process, Evatt issued a number of public statements and attempted unsuccessfully to publish a joint Dominions’ statement, critical of the procedures adopted by the Council. Evatt’s private and public diplomacy failed to secure Australia a place on the Council of Foreign Ministers, but he had faced an impossible task. The Council of Foreign Ministers’ meetings broke down over the question as to which members of the Council should participate in the formulation of the peace treaties with the various Axis satellites. This breakdown pleased Evatt as he believed that the deadlock might lead to a more representative peace-making procedure.

Bevin also believed that advantage would flow from the British and American decision to stand firm against the Russians. Bevin told the
Dominion representatives that he had "never relished taking over the 'Big Three' idea of his predecessor at Potsdam" and he now hoped for a fresh start on a better basis.20

During the months of October and November, Evatt continued to fight to secure Australian participation in the machinery for deciding the peace treaties.21 Evatt was now in Washington representing Australia on the Far Eastern Commission, which had been established during the London Council of Foreign Ministers as a body to assist in the formulation of occupation policy for Japan. But the Soviet Union refused to participate in the Commission and, in any case, the Americans maintained their monopoly over Japanese policy. On all fronts the peace process stalled.

The deadlock was broken by an initiative from the American Secretary of State, James Byrnes, who called for a new meeting of the British, American and Soviet Foreign Ministers to be held in Moscow in late December 1945. Bevin's initial reaction was to refuse to attend, but the British government soon recognised it had no choice as both Washington and Moscow were committed to the proposed meeting.

At Moscow, Bevin had to fight hard for every concession from his fellow Foreign Ministers. The Soviet Union wanted to restrict the drawing up of the peace treaties to the Great Powers. The United States wanted to finalise the procedures for the Japanese peace settlement and to ensure success on this front it was willing to agree to Great Power control over all the peace settlements. The final outcome of the meeting was to establish the peace process for Italy and the Axis satellites. The procedure provided that the states which signed the armistices with the enemy countries, that is the appropriate Great Powers, would in the first instance draw up the draft peace treaties. These states would then convene a general conference of belligerents to consider the draft treaties. Recommendations for amendments to the draft treaties could be made by all participants. Afterwards, the Great Powers would meet again to decide whether to accept the recommendations of the general conference. Then they would draw up the final texts of the peace treaties. These final texts would then be presented to all active belligerents for signature. In the first instance, these procedures were to apply to the peace treaties with Italy and the Axis satellite countries, with the conference being planned for May. It was clearly a process that would
be dominated by the Great Powers and from which Australia would be marginalised.

On the issue of Japan, the Moscow meeting agreed to revised terms of reference for the Far Eastern Commission and to the establishment of an Allied Council for Japan in Tokyo. The revised terms of reference gave the Great Powers a veto in the Far Eastern Commission and ensured that the United States maintained its supremacy over policy for Japan. An Allied Council in Tokyo was established for advisory and consultative purposes, but was given little power over the execution of policy in Japan. The Moscow meeting had largely enshrined the Great Power principle in the peace procedures. Attlee, with the support of his cabinet, had cabled Bevin during the negotiations to state their view that the peace conference as proposed would be seen as merely a face-saving device and that the Dominions would bitterly resent being treated in this way. Attlee called on Bevin to refuse to agree to these terms. But Bevin rejected Attlee’s line, arguing that, with the Americans agreeing with the Russians, the United Kingdom had no choice but to agree to the proposed procedures.

Australia was powerless to influence the negotiations in Moscow. Evatt’s initial reaction when he heard of the meeting was to propose a dignified protest against both the discussion of Pacific matters in Australia’s absence and the failure of the British to consult at an earlier stage. It was the British government, Evatt believed, that was at fault. Evatt was caught by surprise at the turn of events as he was travelling across North America prior to returning to Australia. Although the Australian legation in Washington managed to convey some of the British telegrams to Evatt at Victoria, British Columbia, he was isolated and had no influence on events.

The Australian government also found it impossible to have any significant influence on either events in Moscow or on British policy. The Attlee government did not inform the Dominions of Byrnes’ initiative for a Foreign Ministers’ meeting until two weeks after it first became aware of it. The Dominion governments were informed on 7 December, but even then they were advised that the meeting’s purposes were to discuss atomic energy issues and to provide the opportunity for informal and exploratory discussion of matters of mutual interest. However Bevin knew by then that the meeting was going to be much more than an exploratory discussion.
Accepting the British view of the meeting, the Australian government instructed its minister in Moscow, J.J. Maloney, to oppose the discussion of Far Eastern questions in Australia’s absence, to insist that any talks must be preliminary and general in character, and to seek a general peace conference at which all the issues would be decided.\(^\text{27}\)

At a meeting with Bevin on 19 December, Maloney put forward his government’s views, but Bevin could only reply that, with the Soviet and the American representatives likely to come to agreement, he faced great difficulties.\(^\text{28}\) Australian representations in London and Moscow had little impact on the outcome of the Moscow meeting. The only concession the Australian government secured was British agreement, in which the other Foreign Ministers concurred, that the fourth member of the Allied Council for Japan would be an Australian member representing jointly the United Kingdom, Australia, India and New Zealand.\(^\text{29}\)

The first six months of peace had seen a constant fight by Evatt to gain participation in the peace process and thereby shape the peace treaties. Australia’s exclusion from the Council of Foreign Ministers and its failure to secure status and influence in the Pacific peace machinery had been major setbacks for Australian policy-makers. Weighed down by its world-wide commitments, its financial crisis and its relative weakness vis-a-vis the other great powers, Australia’s closest ally, the United Kingdom, had been unable to accede to Australia’s demands for a meaningful role in the peace process. The Chifley government, still haunted by the experience of 1942, had not been prepared to sit back and let the United Kingdom act on its behalf. But Evatt’s vigorous campaign had had little success as Australia remained marginalised from the major decisions, as it had been during the war. At least the Great Powers had decided to hold a peace conference in Paris. Evatt hoped to make it a true peace conference and not just a rubber stamp.

During the first half of 1946, Pacific security and the Japanese peace settlement remained the dominant interest of Australian foreign policy, but the proposed Paris peace conference was important to Evatt, both on its own terms and as a precedent for the more important peace settlements with Germany and Japan. Evatt maintained his public campaign against the exclusion of the smaller belligerents, both by
public speeches and through an article he published in Foreign Affairs in early 1946 entitled “Risks of a Big-Power Peace”.30

During the Prime Ministers’ meeting held in April and May 1946, Evatt continued to press for the proposed peace conference in Paris to be given the power to decide the terms of the peace treaties with Italy and the other Axis satellites. Evatt’s appeals to the British ministers at the Prime Ministers’ meetings placed the Attlee government in a difficult position. The British government’s freedom of action at the forthcoming peace conference was restricted by the agreement made between the Great Powers that they would be bound by those provisions of the draft treaties which had already been agreed by them at the Council of Foreign Ministers meetings held prior to the general conference. The British government faced an inescapable dilemma. On the one hand, it wished the Commonwealth nations to have a real opportunity to put forward their views on the peace treaties. On the other hand, under the agreed procedures, the United Kingdom could not support amendments proposed by the Dominions to clauses to which the Council had already agreed.31 In resolving this dilemma, the Attlee government decided that to maintain solidarity with its fellow members of the Council of Foreign Ministers was a far more important policy goal than to support the principle of full Dominion participation in the drawing up of the peace treaties.

The peace procedures devised by the Great Powers created problems for Evatt in his efforts to secure meaningful participation for Australia in the European settlement and to enhance its claim to be a party principal in the Japanese settlement. Evatt was also concerned that the peace settlement was being finalised in bargaining between the Great Powers with little regard for either justice or the wishes of the peoples of Europe.32 The peace conference at Paris should not, in Evatt’s view, be faced with unalterable Great Power agreements; it had to have the power to settle the peace. Evatt believed that, if a conference of all belligerents was convened, world opinion would act as an effective counter to any single power that attempted to oppose the views of the majority. Evatt believed that the British underestimated the capacity of the small powers to exert pressure on the Soviet Union.33 Accordingly, he concentrated his pre-conference diplomacy on urging that the conference be convened as soon as possible and that it follow democratic procedures.34
In fact, it was far from certain that a peace conference would be held at all. The international climate had deteriorated rapidly by 1946. Wartime co-operation was turning into peacetime confrontation. Churchill’s “iron curtain” speech delivered at Fulton, Missouri on 5 March 1946 had marked the beginning of the Cold War. During the first session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Paris from 25 April to 16 May, the Great Powers were deadlocked over the draft treaties. The commencement date for the peace conference was postponed. Evatt himself travelled to Paris to appeal to the Foreign Ministers to immediately convene the peace conference even though the Council had not agreed upon the texts of the draft treaties. After adjournment for a month, the deadlock was finally broken in early July at a second session of the Council when draft treaties were hammered out between the Foreign Ministers. It was decided that the full peace conference would start on 29 July. However, a vast gulf on many issues still separated the United States and the United Kingdom on one side and the Soviet Union on the other.

The successful test of an atom bomb at Bikini atoll underlined the importance of ensuring a long-lasting peace. Over fifteen hundred delegates, advisers and secretaries assembled in Paris for the conference. Evatt’s dramatic intervention at the opening session set the agenda for the first weeks of the conference. The thrust of all Evatt’s diplomacy during the first week was to make the conference a reality and not just a formality. The Council of Foreign Ministers had agreed that recommendations for amendments to the draft treaties should go forward for consideration by the Council in its final deliberations if they received a two-thirds majority. Such a rule would, in effect, have given the Soviet bloc of countries (or indeed any of the Great Powers) a veto in practice. Evatt attacked this principle in his speech at the plenary session on 31 July.

In the early sessions Evatt worked very hard to get democratic principles written into the procedural rules of the conference. He vigorously argued that decisions ought to be taken on the basis of a simple majority as the conference was only empowered to make recommendations to the Council of Foreign Ministers, which was under no obligation to accept them. Australia’s efforts to empower the conference and to limit the Great Powers’ dominance of the peace process brought the wrath of the Soviet delegation upon Evatt and the
other Australian representatives. The Soviet delegate, Molotov, immediately indicated his government's attitude by advocating very restrictive procedures for the conference and by attacking Evatt and the Australian delegation. The Australians counter-attacked. Not only did the Australian delegation consider that the Soviet proposal would give the Soviet Union a veto, but they recognised that it would also create a dangerous precedent for the more important peace conferences on Germany and Japan.

Eventually, after an almighty fight, a compromise proposed by the British delegation for there to be two categories of recommendations to go forward to the Council of Foreign Ministers, those passed by a two-thirds majority and those passed by a simple majority, was accepted by the conference. Even after this had been agreed by a vote of fifteen to six in the procedural committee, Molotov continued his attack against Evatt in the plenary commission, accusing him of acting as the agent of the other Western powers. Evatt's reply that he was motivated only by the need for democratic procedures was warmly applauded by the conference delegates. The outcome of this dispute was a partial victory for Evatt and his delegation. For Evatt, his efforts to democratise the procedures of the Paris peace conference were not just an attempt to maintain his position as spokesman for the small powers, nor simply a function of his ambition, but rather part of his continuing campaign to break the stranglehold of the Great Powers over the post-war settlement. The Australian delegation viewed the Soviet delegation's intimidatory tactics as part of a deliberate policy to protect the monopoly of the Great Powers over the treaties.

Having fought for more democratic procedures to be followed by the conference, Evatt made a series of public announcements detailing the large number of amendments to the peace treaties he proposed to make, more in fact than any other delegation. Evatt stressed that the victors should not act in a spirit of vindictiveness or caprice, that there should be justice for all peoples, that every effort should be made to ensure that there would not be a resurgence of fascism and that there should be a comprehensive peace, not a series of individual and isolated claims against neighbouring countries. The amendments were sourced in the liberal internationalism that provided the theoretical basis for Australian foreign policy under Evatt, the belief that a long-lasting settlement would require the reconstitution of the European economy.
and a desire not to repeat the mistakes of the 1919 settlement. These amendments were the result of work by all members of the Australian delegation, especially John Burton, Evatt's future Secretary of the Department of External Affairs. The delegation also had access to the advice of experts back in Australia such as H.C. Coombs. The Australian amendments were designed to incorporate five general principles into the peace treaties: (1) to guarantee human rights under all the treaties; (2) to re-establish a successful European economy; (3) to base all territorial and frontier decisions on principles of justice and the facts of each case; (4) to allow for the revision of the treaties as time passed, and mistakes were revealed; (5) and to make the treaties generally conform to the principles contained in the Atlantic Charter and the United Nations Charter. More specifically, the Australian amendments provided firstly, for a Special European Court of Human Rights to guarantee the implementation of all the assurances with regard to human rights that were written into the treaties. Secondly, they provided for investigatory commissions in cases where the conference considered more information was required before making a final decision. In particular, the Australians wanted investigations into frontier disputes. Thirdly, they provided for small power as well as Great Power membership of any ongoing body established to implement any provision of the peace treaties (the formula suggested was three lesser powers and the four Great Powers). For example, Australia opposed the proposal that the administration and disposal of the Italian colonies should be determined by the Council of Foreign Ministers alone. It proposed that these questions be dealt with by a commission of seven belligerents, including the four Great Powers. Similarly, the Australian delegation opposed the referral of the administration of the port of Trieste to the Security Council, where a veto applied, again suggesting that responsibility be given to a body of seven belligerents. Fourthly, the Australian amendments provided for a Reparations Commission to determine both the amount of reparations that was payable by the ex-enemy states and their ability to pay them. Specifically, the level of reparations should be determined with reference to the proven losses of all claiming countries and the reasonable capacity to pay of the ex-enemy state in question, and take into account the interests of all nations that trade with ex-enemy countries. The Australians wished to avoid reparations which would lower economic growth and lead to
distortions in the European economy. Evatt therefore pressed for the
 treaties to provide for full employment and increased living standards
 for all Europeans. In general, Australia wanted the economic provi-
 sions of the treaties to provide for closer European economic co-op-
 eration. Evatt even hinted that the distant solution might lie in a
 federation of Europe. 43 Fifthly, the amendments sought to make pro-
 vision for revision of the treaties if this should prove necessary in the
 future. The Australians wished to avoid a repeat of the disaster of the
 inflexibility of the 1919 peace treaty decisions. 44

 The liberal nature of the Australian amendments was partly circum-
 scribed by Evatt’s policy of limiting participation in the peace process
 to active belligerents. The level of a nation’s contribution to the war
 effort, in Evatt’s eyes, was to be the guiding principle for deciding
 membership of the peace conferences. This approach promised to
 maximise Australia’s influence and create a precedent for Australia to
 participate in the Japanese peace settlement as a principal party. If
 accepted, this would exclude nations such as France from the Far East
 peace process, limit the Soviet Union’s role in the Japanese settlement
 and ensure Australia’s status as a party principal at the Pacific peace
 table. For this purpose, Australia opposed the proposal that, if the Great
 Powers had not reached agreement on the disposal of the Italian
 colonies after one year, the issue be referred to the United Nations. Such
 an approach would give non-belligerent nations a say, thereby breaking
 the nexus between war effort and participation in the peace process.
 Accordingly, Australia proposed the establishment of a commission
 consisting of the four Great Powers and three other active belligerents
 in the war against Italy to deal with this issue. 45

 After the initial plenary sessions in which general introductory
 speeches were made by all representatives and the procedural matters
 were decided, the conference broke up in the fourth week into various
 commissions to work upon the individual peace treaties. The forthcoming
 domestic election campaign forced Evatt to return to Australia in
 late August. Yet in the short time he was in Paris, Evatt made an
 enormous impact on the conference. At the end of the conference in
 October, an American broadcasting company questioned over one
 hundred accredited journalists as to which five statesmen had distin-
guished themselves favourably and which unfavourably. Evatt came
 third in the list of favourable with thirty-eight votes and second in the
unfavourable with twenty-five votes. One enthusiast wrote: “Evatt, Evatt, Evatt, Evatt, Evatt”. After Evatt left, the Australian delegation carried on the work he had started.

The Commissions met continuously until 5 October when they were required to report back to the Plenary Conference. In some of the Commissions, the discussions were extremely lengthy and their work was only completed by almost round-the-clock sessions. The Australians took an active role in the work of the Commissions, but in general the Australian amendments received little support. The Australian proposal for a Court of Human Rights was rejected in the Italian Commission by fifteen votes to four, with one abstention. The proposal for a provision for treaty revision was defeated by nine votes to one, with one abstention. The Australian amendments were often withdrawn after thorough debates revealed that they would receive little support. The only major success for the Australian delegation was the acceptance of their recommendation that a modified Reparations Commission be provided for in the Italian peace treaty.

After the United Kingdom’s initial intervention to secure a compromise on the voting procedures, for which Evatt was grateful, the Australian delegation received little support from the British delegation for their amendments. Bevin admitted that there was “much credit” in a number of the Australian amendments, but he would not support them. His chief concern was that the peace conference was becoming bogged down. The British delegation feared that the welter of Australian amendments, that had no chance of being accepted, would dangerously delay the conference. Tied by their obligation to support the Great Power drafts of the peace treaties and anxious to bring the conference to an end, the British pressed the Australians not to raise their amendments again in the final plenary meetings. But in line with his policy of making a stand on principle even where there was little chance of success, Evatt, back in Australia, instructed his chief delegate, J.A. Beasley, to put many of the Australian amendments to the vote, only for them to be again rejected by the plenary conference.

Significantly, the only major effect of the Australian amendments was to bring the wrath of the Soviet delegation upon the Australians. At the conference itself, the Australian representatives came under a severe and concerted attack from the Soviet delegates who accused the Australians of acting on behalf of the Anglo-American bloc. Beasley
appealed in vain for support from his British colleagues against the Soviet onslaught and their failure to respond caused some ill-feeling between the British and Australian delegations. The final plenary meetings held from 7–15 October were set-pieces, where the reports from the Commissions were submitted to the conference as a whole. Each delegate had thirty minutes to speak on each treaty, if so desired, before a vote was taken. No new matters of importance were raised at these sessions, and the voting generally followed closely that already cast in the separate Commissions. For the most part, they were an opportunity to underline the arguments made in the Commissions and to cast a formal vote. Beasley took the opportunity to reiterate the principles that Australia felt should be applied to the treaties and outline the major amendments that the delegation had proposed.

Despite the strenuous efforts of Evatt and the Australian delegation, there were few concrete achievements. Evatt had been frustrated by the procedures adopted at the Paris peace conference. His attempt to shape the peace settlements had failed. Very few of the Australian amendments to the Axis satellite peace treaties were accepted by the Great Powers at the New York Council of Foreign Ministers meeting held in late 1946. One of the few amendments to be accepted in the final treaties was the proposal to exempt the intellectual and property rights of Italian writers and artists from the assets that could be seized for reparations. Even Australia’s major success in Paris, the recommendation for a Reparations Commission for Italy, was rejected by the Council of Foreign Ministers. The Great Powers continued to control the post-war international settlement to the exclusion of the smaller powers. Despite the defects in the procedures followed at Paris and the shortcomings of the treaties themselves, which both Evatt and Chifley detailed in parliament, the Chifley government had no option, but to sign the treaties concluded by the Great Powers. But they continued their fight. At the New York Council of Foreign Ministers meeting it was decided that the next meeting of the Council would be held in March 1947 to consider the German and Austrian peace settlements. It also agreed to appoint Deputies of the Foreign Ministers who would meet in London from 14 January to give preliminary consideration to the problems associated with these peace settlements. The Deputies were delegated the task of receiving the views of the other belligerents.

Accordingly, Australia was invited to present its views in writing
on the German and Austrian peace treaties, to be supplemented by an oral presentation if desired.\textsuperscript{54} Evatt, still in Australia, appointed Beasley and W.R. Hodgson to represent Australia before the Deputies in London. Evatt instructed them to make every effort to remedy the defects in the procedures that had been followed in Paris. Although the Australian government submitted its substantive views on the peace settlements, Beasley and Hodgson were instructed to concentrate on the procedural issue, specifically to broaden participation in the peace process so as to maximise Australia’s influence.\textsuperscript{55}

However, the Australian representatives, under direct instructions, also put forward a proposal to replace the Potsdam agreement with an interim peace agreement. The Chifley government saw this interim proposal as a means to stop the steady slide of the situation in Germany. The interim agreement, under which a centralised German administration, but not government, would be re-constituted, was planned to contain most of the features of the eventual peace treaty. It was designed to bring unity back to occupation policy in the four zones of Germany. The Australians hoped that the adoption of such an agreement would halt the deterioration of relations between the Soviet Union and the Western powers over the German problem. The Australian government envisaged that the interim agreement, in contrast to the Potsdam agreement, would be drawn up by, and be subject to, the authority of all the active belligerents. Again, the aim of the Australian government was both to maximise its influence and to apply the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Atlantic Charter to the peace settlements.\textsuperscript{56}

Hodgson put the Australian government’s proposal to the Deputies on 23 January 1946, but it was swiftly rejected. Hodgson and the Soviet representative, Gousev, indulged in a heated argument over the procedures followed at the Paris peace conference, especially the degree of participation accorded to the smaller belligerents. Not surprisingly, the procedure recommended by the Deputies maintained the monopoly of the Great Powers over the peace process.\textsuperscript{57}

Evatt found the procedure as recommended by the Deputies to the Foreign Ministers unacceptable as it was undemocratic, giving the Dominions merely formal as opposed to real participation in the drafting of the German peace treaty.\textsuperscript{58} Australia protested to the British government, to the American Secretary of State, George Marshall, and
to the French Foreign Minister, George Bidault. Evatt also approached the other Commonwealth governments with a request that they join him in his protest.\(^5^9\)

Increasingly frustrated at Australia's exclusion from the peace process, Evatt, as a last resort, suggested to the British government on 28 February 1947 that the Dominions be given a role in the German peace settlement by means of the British Commonwealth being represented as a unit at the forthcoming Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Moscow. He proposed that the delegation be selected on a Commonwealth rather than a solely British basis. Evatt recognised the danger of such a concession to Australia's status as a party principal, but with the Japanese peace settlement in mind, he saw the possibility that, if Bevin and the British led a Commonwealth team in Moscow, he and Australia could play the leading role in a similar arrangement for the Japanese peace settlement.\(^6^0\) The proposal was immediately rejected by the British government, which believed that the idea of a Commonwealth unit was quite unattainable. In any case, time was too short for such a change to be pushed through before Bevin and his delegation were due to leave for Moscow. To assuage Evatt's concern, the British promised to oppose vigorously any attempt to make the procedures for the European settlement a precedent for the Pacific settlement.\(^6^1\)

At the Council of Foreign Ministers' meeting in Moscow in March, Australia's principal object was to secure a conference of all active belligerents with the power to formulate the peace treaty. Evatt continued to impress upon the British, both in London and through the Australian legation in Moscow, the views of the Australian government. Bevin told the Australian Charge d'affaires in Moscow, Noel Deschamps, that he would accept the idea of concerted action by the big four, likening it to taking a caucus decision to parliament. Deschamps also reported the British delegation's hope that any peace conference would be of a merely formal nature. Acting on these reports from Moscow, Evatt sent a series of stinging protests to London in late March accusing the British government of failing to do all it could to obtain for the Dominions the degree of participation to which they were entitled. The American procedural proposals, Evatt claimed, were much more satisfactory from the Dominions' point of view than those of the British. He further accused the British government of misleading Australia as to the true position.\(^6^2\) Evatt's protest drew a harsh response
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from Bevin, and Attlee described Evatt’s message as “stupid and unintelligent”. The British government firmly rejected Evatt’s complaint and, rightly so in respect of Evatt’s contention that the American proposals were more in accord with Dominion demands. But in general terms, Evatt’s complaint was valid. The British were not interested in dismantling the Great Power hegemony over the peace settlements.

Bevin and his officials had always assumed that the Great Powers would effectively determine the peace settlement. This had always been the case before in history and they saw no reason why it would not be so again. Power politics was, the British believed, the way of the world. Evatt and his officials, by contrast, believed that only through a new approach, in which all nations that had significantly contributed to the defeat of the enemy participated, could a long lasting peace be achieved. Such an approach, although couched in terms of principle, also promised to maximise the influence of Australia over the post-war international settlement.

By 1947, the British government had even less freedom than in 1945 to press the Dominions’ claims in Moscow. It had become increasingly clear that a permanent breach between the United States and the United Kingdom on one side and the Soviet Union on the other was developing. At the time of the Moscow meeting, Bevin wrote to Attlee that the Soviets were destroying the possibility of a real peace and that “we are getting perilously near a position in which a line up is taking place”. The Moscow Council of Foreign Ministers ended with the Western powers and the Soviet Union unable to agree on the peace terms, the procedures, or the future of Germany. Evatt’s proposal for the Commonwealth to attend the Moscow meeting as a unit had been a response to the intransigence of the Great Powers and to the increasingly limited role accorded to the small powers in the post-war settlement. The onset of the Cold War in 1947 and the consequent permanent division of Germany and Europe meant that the belligerents slid into a de facto European peace settlement based on the decisions made by the Great Powers during the war. The settlement reflected the disposition of their respective armies and their spheres of power at the time of victory. Despite frequent calls by Evatt in the following years for the peace process to be re-started, it didn’t happen in the life of the Chifley government. The final result was a far cry from the peace settlement
sought by Evatt based on principles of justice and human rights, and improvements in economic and social conditions.

What then can be said about Evatt’s diplomacy towards the European peace settlements? At one level it can be described as a monumental failure. Australia’s participation was limited, and its direct influence on the final result almost negligible. Even the attempt to bolster Australia’s bargaining position in the Far East by lifting its profile in the European peace process was to be frustrated as the Japanese peace process also stalled because of cold war tensions and America’s determination to unilaterally determine Japanese occupation policy. But just as Billy Hughes’ efforts at the Paris conference in 1919 had almost created Australia’s international status, so too did Evatt’s efforts, particularly at the 1946 Paris conference, enhance Australia’s status as an independent sovereign nation. From the perspective of the 1990s this might seem a small achievement, but it was an important step forward in defining Australia’s international identity.

Beyond the questions of status and strategic interest, there was an undeniable element of principle in Evatt’s policy that deserves attention. Bill Dunk, then Secretary of the Department of Affairs and a delegate at the Paris conference, wrote in his report that Australia “had no axe to grind and no motive except to bring into being a peace which would endure”. He emphasised that the decisions of the Great Powers did not promote the possibility of an undivided and prosperous European economy. He noted that many delegations admitted the logic of the Australian amendments, but could not support them because of the prior commitments made by the Council of Foreign Ministers. He concluded:

The logic remains, however, and the fact that, notwithstanding the early indications that support would be lacking, the amendments were pressed with vigor, is to the credit of a country young in diplomacy but staunch in a love of freedom and a testimony to the brilliant thinking of the leader of the Delegation. If, as I believe will be the case, history shows the general principles which underlay the Australian amendments to have been right, it will be sad, but at least we will have the somewhat mournful satisfaction of being able to say “I told you so”.

Twice in thirty years, Australians in large numbers had fought and died in and over Europe. The efforts of Evatt, the Chifley government and Australian officials to bring about a just and lasting peace deserve recognition. One historian of the conference, Stephen Kertesz, who had
participated in the conference as part of the Hungarian delegation, one of the ex-enemy states, noted that Evatt was one of the few delegates to introduce constructive ideas at the conference that would have brought the treaties more in line with concepts of peace and justice. He writes:

Wartime concessions to Moscow were understandable. But at the peace table only determined resistance to unjustified Soviet demands could have a result. There were exceptional delegates — like Evatt of Australia — but their proposals were from voices in the wilderness.68

The postwar history of Europe may have been very different had Evatt's proposals been heeded.
By the end of 1945 the world had suffered thirty years of almost continuous crisis. The war to end all wars had been followed by the Great Depression and then by another even more destructive global conflict. During the latter part of World War II, the Australian Labor government searched for alternative solutions to prevent the repetition of such grave problems. One possibility the government seized upon was the proposal being developed by the Great Allied Powers for a new world organisation and a new "set of rules" to regulate international relations. At the San Francisco conference in early 1945, these proposals, after some amendment, were given concrete form as the United Nations Charter.

The Australian delegation to this conference, led by the dynamic Australian Minister for External Affairs, Dr Herbert Vere Evatt, played a significant, if limited, role in shaping important parts of the Charter. The Charter was the result of the triumph of those sections of intellectual and political opinion throughout the world which believed that the ideas and principles embodied in liberal internationalism should govern international relations. Liberal internationalism embraced a wide range of related ideas and goals including the assumption that economic prosperity and social progress form the bases for peace, the need to end secret diplomacy and to limit strategic power, the use of multilateral institutions and internationalised armed forces to resolve international conflict, the universal application of human rights to all men and women, the principle of self-determination for all peoples leading to the end of colonialism and the application of the rule of law to international relations. It had long been debated whether such an
“idealistic” approach could, in practice, prevent or at least reduce international conflict.

The United Nations Charter provided a new constitution for the world and created two major bodies, the Security Council and the General Assembly, to deal with the issues of peace and war. As with all constitutions (whether their application is intra-state or inter-state), the Charter left more unsaid than said. The general principles were laid down, but many of the procedures and conventions of the new organisation were not. How would the provisions of the Charter be applied to international disputes? How would the various bodies of the United Nations operate? How would the provisions of the Charter be interpreted? Would the existence of a veto for the permanent members of the Security Council lead to the paralysis of the new organisation?

It was these questions that Australia faced, as an initial non-permanent member of the Security Council, when the Iranian crisis of early 1946 arose as the first great test for the United Nations. The actions of Australia during the Iranian crisis, both in the Security Council itself and in its exchanges with its closest ally, the United Kingdom, reveal that it made a concerted effort to make the Council work as a security tribunal governed by legal principle and regular procedures. In doing so Australia attempted to put into practice one of the most important tenets of liberal internationalism: that regular and proper process and the rule of law can and should be applied to settling international disputes. Australia was prepared to press on with this campaign to regularise the procedures of the Security Council in the face of disapproval from all the Great Powers. As such, this episode in Australian foreign policy not only provides some insights into the early history of the Security Council, but also casts more light on the ideas that shaped Evatt’s foreign policy in the post-war period.

Evatt seized upon the Iranian issue as an opportunity to apply liberal internationalist and legal principles to the procedures of the Council. By so doing, he attempted to get the Council to assume a radically new role in international disputes.1 In relation to the peaceful settlement of disputes under Chapter 6 of the Charter, Evatt argued that the Security Council was “essentially a quasi-judicial body”. He drew support for this proposition from the rule in paragraph 3 of Article 27 of the Charter that a country which was party to a dispute brought before the Council must refrain from voting. Since such a rule characterised judicial
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tribunals, Evatt reasoned that the Council must constitute such a tribunal. Evatt wanted the Council to play the same role with respect to non-justiciable disputes. Everything in Evatt's character, training and career pushed him into such an approach to international relations. It should be pointed out that Evatt was not alone in following such an approach. The "engine room" of Australian policy during the Iranian crisis was the United Nations division of the Department of External Affairs, but Evatt was directly involved and frequently instructed his representatives at the Council by telephone.

The Australian policy was to encourage the Security Council to deal with disputes in a regular, impartial and judicial manner. As a security tribunal it followed that its procedures should be governed by legal principles. Specifically, Evatt wanted the Council to stipulate that complaints should be made in the proper manner and form, with written, not oral submissions, supported by all relevant documentation. The country against which the complaint had been made should be given the time to prepare a full written reply. The Council should only make a determination after a full investigation had ascertained all the facts. Finally, once informed of a dispute, only the Council itself, not the parties to the dispute, could decide to drop the matter. In the course of the Iranian crisis, Evatt instructed his representatives that the Council "should administer impartial justice according to equity and good conscience and the proved merits of a particular case." Evatt placed great emphasis on his policy of investigation. He believed that an investigation could establish the circumstances and causes of any dispute, which would then provide the basis for just and lasting settlements.

Evatt recognised the important role that the United Nations could play in shaping world opinion. He also believed that the weight of world opinion could help to ensure both that the Security Council acted in a judicial and impartial way, and that nations would accept its resolutions. Accordingly Evatt opposed any drift towards the Council becoming merely a forum for propaganda, where discussion would simply descend into a meaningless and counter-productive process of assertion and counter-assertion. He saw propaganda and public clamour not only as an unwarranted interference in the Council's affairs, but also an impediment to discovering the true facts in each case. Such
activities, he believed, damaged the judicial nature and prestige of the United Nations.

While acknowledging that different types of disputes may require different types of procedures, Evatt believed that the same broad principles would have to be applied in each case if the Security Council was to constitute a security tribunal. With a lawyer's understanding of the role and importance of the doctrine of precedent, Evatt knew that if regular and methodical procedures were not followed by the Council from the very beginning, there would be little hope for his vision of the Council being governed by principle rather than by power politics. A single false step, he believed, would seriously damage the Security Council. In summary, Evatt wanted the Security Council to act as a security tribunal governed by the principles of the Charter, with methodical procedures, with an investigatory function and with many of the features of a legal court.³

The interests and purposes of Evatt and his department were in complete contrast to that of the British and American governments. The British and Americans concentrated on what they perceived to be the immediate threat from the Soviet Union to Iran. Iran was the arena for the first major test of the new world organisation. It was in this country that the conflicting interests of the three great wartime Allies, the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom, were first manifested.⁴ The confrontation between the Great Powers arose over the question of Soviet interference in the internal affairs of Iran, culminating in the failure of the Soviet Union to withdraw its troops by 2 March 1946 as required by a wartime treaty. During the war Iran had been a vital element in the Allied strategy against Germany, providing a conduit for the United States and the United Kingdom to send war material to the Red Army on the eastern front. To secure this supply route the three Allied powers signed a Tripartite treaty on 29 January 1942. Under this agreement, Iran was effectively divided into spheres of influence between the Russians in the north, and the British and Americans in the south. The treaty provided for the withdrawal of all the foreign troops stationed in Iran within six months of peace between the Allied powers and Germany and its associates.⁵

Traditionally, the United Kingdom had seen the Middle East as being part either of its formal or informal empire. In the nineteenth century there had been a continuing story of imperial rivalry between
Great Britain and Russia in this region, a threat which was the chief concern of many British Foreign Secretaries of that period. In his attitude and policy towards the Middle East, Ernest Bevin, the Attlee Government's Foreign Secretary, was little different from his predecessors. In early 1946 he considered that the Soviet government was attempting to engineer a change of government within Iran to one of pro-Soviet sympathies. Even if Moscow did not go this far, Bevin and the Foreign Office believed that the Soviet government planned to use its troops and agents to extort by the threat of force an agreement from the Iranian government that would satisfy its strategic and economic interests. At the very least, Bevin feared that the presence of Soviet troops in northern Iran would enable Moscow to establish an autonomous pro-Soviet government in the northern province of Azerbaijan. The Soviet interference in Iranian affairs was seen as a threat to both British oil and strategic interests. Bevin viewed the Soviet government’s actions in Iran as part of a wider attempt to encircle Turkey by Moscow-dominated states: the war in Greece being another part of this strategy. The Dominions had been advised of British concern over the possibility of Soviet expansionism into the Middle East at the time of the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in London in September 1945. Indeed the messages to the Dominion Prime Ministers inviting them to be in London to be on hand for consultation during the Foreign Ministers’ meeting was couched in terms of the need for a unified Commonwealth stand to meet the Soviet threat to the Middle and Far East. Evatt, who represented Australia at these Commonwealth consultative meetings, did not share the concern of Bevin and the Foreign Office. He argued that the Soviet diplomatic moves in the Middle East should not be taken seriously as they were being advanced for “bargaining purposes”. Unlike Bevin, he interpreted the post-war diplomacy and actions of the Soviet Union as being guided by defensive not aggressive intent. Indeed, during the London talks he specifically accused the Foreign Office of forever “ganging up” against the USSR. Evatt claimed that the Foreign Office reports were coloured and distorted by “this unfortunate suspicion of Soviet motives”. With devastating prescience, Evatt concluded that, “We were in real danger of dividing Europe into East and West by giving way to this obsession.”

The American government also had much at stake in the Iranian
crisis. One of the problems faced by both the British and American governments in early 1946 was how, with both governments moving from a policy of co-operation with the Soviet Union to one of confrontation, they could bring public opinion to support such a change. This was a particularly thorny problem given the favourable picture of “Uncle Joe” Stalin and the Red Army that military success and wartime propaganda had created in the west. Such attitudes of warmth had been reinforced by the swing to the left of the political mood in the United Kingdom. In a recent study of the Iranian crisis, the American diplomatic historian, Fraser Harbutt, has argued convincingly that the Iranian dispute was the crucial event that enabled the Truman administration to mobilise American public opinion behind a tough confrontationist anti-Soviet policy. With the crisis being fought out in the Security Council, the United States assumed the role of defending the United Nations, while the Soviet Union was caught interfering in Iran’s internal affairs. In the battle for public opinion, the Americans seized the high moral ground. From this position of strength, James F. Byrnes, the American Secretary of State, was able to implement publicly the policy of confrontation, described as containment, against the Soviet Union, which in early 1946 the Truman administration had decided was necessary to meet the Soviet threat.9

For Bevin and the Foreign Office, this move to an Anglo-American coalition against the Soviet Union was a condition precedent to the achievement of their desired post-war international settlement. Accordingly, both the British and American governments attached great importance to achieving a swift “victory” over the Soviet Union in the clash over Iran. Delay in settling the crisis would, they believed, only favour Moscow. There was then a direct conflict of purpose between Australia on the one hand and the United Kingdom and the United States (and indeed also the Soviet Union) on the other when the first major crisis of the cold war came before the Security Council. These differences were not simply a dry argument in the theory of the practice of international relations. It was a moment of high crisis when both Bevin and President Truman believed that war might only be a few days away.10 The Security Council held centre stage in the world’s eyes, its deliberations were reported on the front pages of the world’s newspapers and a large slice of world opinion had invested its hopes for peace in the United Nations. By means of stubborn diplomacy,
Australia had been elected to a two-year term on the Council after a direct contest with Canada. Initially, the United Kingdom had supported Canada as it was the senior Dominion in the Commonwealth, but Evatt had been determined to secure a position for Australia. After three inconclusive votes Canada withdrew. This was a significant victory for Evatt as it gave him the opportunity to influence the procedures and actions of the Council in its vital formative years.

During 1945 the question of the internal situation in Iran, including the presence of Allied troops, had been discussed at the meetings of the Allied leaders at Yalta and Potsdam, and again at the Council of Foreign Ministers’ meeting in London, but no final resolution was reached. The United Kingdom raised the issue at the Foreign Ministers’ meeting held in Moscow in late December 1945. But no agreement was reached at that meeting on a British proposal to form a joint British/American/Soviet commission to advise the Iranian government on these matters. The Iranian government eventually rejected the proposal for a commission altogether.

After a period of uncertainty and indecision, Iran decided to bring a complaint against the Soviet Union to the first Security Council session held in London in late January 1946. There were two elements in the Iranian government’s complaint. Firstly, Iran accused Moscow of supporting political movements which were calling for autonomy in Iran’s northern provinces. Secondly, Iran called for the early withdrawal of all Allied troops from its territory as their presence impinged on Iranian sovereignty. The Iranian letter of complaint to the Security Council claimed that interference by Soviet officials and armed forces in the internal affairs of Iran was creating a situation which might lead to international friction. The Iranian government later amended its complaint to state that an actual dispute existed between Iran and the Soviet Union. The Ukrainian and Soviet governments countered by making complaints against the actions of British troops in Greece and Indonesia. When the Security Council met on 25 January 1946 it was agreed that the Iranian representative be heard. Andrei Vyshinsky, the Soviet representative, reserved the right to argue that there were no grounds under the Charter for the Iranian complaint to be heard and therefore should not be admitted to the agenda at all.

From the very beginning of the Council’s consideration of this complaint, the focus of Australian policy was on the procedures that
the Council should follow in dealing with the dispute. The Department of External Affairs saw two stark alternatives for handling the matter: either according to the principles of the Charter in a regular and public way, or “secretly according to the dictates of power politics”. Australian policy was to pursue the former and oppose the latter. On 28 January, Norman Makin, who was Australia’s representative and, by virtue of Australia’s alphabetical precedence, also chairman of the Council, began the discussion about the Iranian complaint by stressing the importance of establishing a sound procedure given the absence of rules. Following Evatt’s line, he argued that the “world had the right to expect of the Security Council that it would deal with such matters in a regular way and in accordance with the principles of justice and fair play in the Charter”.

After being invited to join the Council’s deliberations, the Iranian representative stated at some length his government’s complaint against the Soviet Union, but he also expressed willingness to negotiate directly with Moscow. In his turn, Vsyhinsky noted that bilateral negotiations between the two governments had already taken place. He argued that no dispute existed between the two countries under the provisions of the Charter and recommended that the Council should leave it to the two governments to conclude their negotiations. At the next meeting two days later, the Iranian representative rejected Vyshinsky’s claim that the negotiations had been progressing satisfactorily. Iran, he said, was prepared to continue to negotiate directly with the Soviet Union only if the Council maintained what would be, in effect, a watching brief. There then followed angry across-the-table exchanges between Bevin and Vyshinsky over whether the item should be kept before the Security Council. Bevin argued: “There was no objection to negotiations between Iran and the Soviet Union, but power counted in negotiations and the United Nations could maintain a sense of justice by holding a balance between the two parties.” The American, Chinese and French, in more moderate language, supported Bevin. For Australia, Makin argued that the Council should be kept informed of the progress of the negotiations and that it had the right to take any further action, at a later state, that it thought fit. After a sometimes acrimonious debate lasting four hours the Council reached a compromise resolution which, noting that bilateral negotiations were to continue, requested the two governments to inform the Council of their
result. The Council reserved the right to request at any time an update on the progress of the negotiations. It was an uneasy truce.\textsuperscript{17}

Evatt was disappointed at the course of events, believing that the vigorous and unseemly exchanges between Bevin and Vsyhinsky had damaged both the Council’s prestige and his hopes of it acting as a security tribunal. The process of assertion followed by counter-assertion, accompanied by matching propaganda outside the Council, was seen by Evatt as self-defeating. Both the actions of the participants, and the procedures followed during the London Council meetings, failed to meet Evatt’s vision for the United Nations.\textsuperscript{18}

The situation in Iran remained tense during February and March. Soviet troop movements in northern Iran continued, but these did not appear to be related to a withdrawal. If anything, the Soviet presence in Iran seemed to be increasing. The Soviet government refused to reply to American queries about Soviet actions and intentions. There were rumours of a possible coup in Tehran,\textsuperscript{19} while the British Charge d’Affaires in Moscow, reported that the Soviet government planned to extort an agreement from the Iranian government by the threat of force if necessary.\textsuperscript{20} The situation was very confused. On 15 March, the Australian External Affairs officer in London, John Hood, reported to Canberra that the Soviet troop movements in northern Iran “do not make any very clear or conclusive picture”, adding that Iran intended to lodge a new appeal to the Security Council about the continuing Soviet actions.\textsuperscript{21}

In the meantime, relations between the wartime Allies were rapidly worsening. In late February, in Moscow, George Kennan, a senior American diplomat, had crystallised American fears and policy about the nature of Soviet foreign policy in his famous long telegram. One of Bevin’s key officials in Moscow, Frank Roberts, had carried out a similar task for the British government. Within the Foreign Office, hardline attitudes opposed to the possibility of co-operation with the Soviet Union were becoming dominant. At Fulton, Missouri on 5 March, Churchill made his famous “iron curtain” speech which defined superpower relations for a generation. The battlelines of the Cold War had begun to be drawn.\textsuperscript{22}

The Security Council was due to meet again on 25 March in New York. On 19 March, Iran informed the UN President that a dispute existed between it and the Soviet Union under article 35 (1) of the
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Charter. Iran claimed that new developments since the Council last considered the issue at the end of January formed the basis of the dispute. These developments were the presence of Soviet troops in Iran in contravention of Article 5 of the Tripartite treaty of Alliance of 1942 and the continuing meddling by Soviet officials and its armed forces in the internal affairs of Iran. The United States took the lead in supporting the Iranian complaint when, on the following day, it asked that consideration of the Iranian note be placed at the head of the Security Council agenda. The Truman Administration’s strategy was to bring the issue to a head in the Council as soon as possible. Edward Stettinius Jr, the American delegate to the Council, also requested that the two parties to the dispute report to the Council about the state of the negotiations since the resolution of 30 January.

In response, the Soviet Union adopted a tactic of delay. Arguing that bilateral negotiations were continuing, the Soviet representative to the Council, Andrei Gromyko, sought the postponement of the next Council meeting until 10 April. For the British government, the matter was quite straightforward. The vital issue, the Dominions Office informed Canberra, was whether the Soviet government would withdraw its troops in accordance with its treaty obligations. The Dominions Office contended that there was no reason for an adjournment while the Soviet troops remained in Iran. Bevin was pleased that the Americans were taking the lead in handling the Iranian crisis as the similarity of their approach on this issue was cementing the Anglo-American coalition against the Soviet Union. He instructed his representative at the Security Council, Alec Cadogan, to secure, if possible, a resolution calling for the immediate withdrawal of all Soviet forces from Iran. At the very least Bevin wanted the Council to express its attitude on the Iranian complaint and to continue to bolster the Iranian government’s stand against Soviet interference in its affairs. The British feared that any delay or adjournment would give the Soviet government time to pressure the Iranians into accepting an agreement and thereby present the Council with a fait accompli. Australia was well aware of the forceful public position taken by the United States and was advised by its delegation in New York that there would be strong Anglo-American opposition to an adjournment of the Iranian case without discussion. This was the situation Evatt faced in Canberra, ten thousand miles from the centre of the diplomatic battle. The crisis between the Great Powers
seemed to be leading to outright conflict. The very future of the United Nations appeared to be at stake. The importance which the Americans attached to the happenings at the Security Council was evidenced by their being represented on the Council by Byrnes. Evatt, undaunted by all these momentous events, was still determined to pursue his own campaign to shape the Security Council as a security tribunal, even in the face of the conflicting interests of the Great Powers.

With the likely prospect of a major confrontation when the Security Council met again, two further events complicated an already confused picture. Firstly, there were press reports on 24 March of a claim by the Iranian Prime Minister, Qavam el Sultaneh, that no action was required by the Security Council since a solution to the dispute could be reached via bilateral negotiations. The Iranian government’s actions during the dispute were motivated not only by its reaction to the great power diplomacy over its territory, but also by domestic political battles. Secondly, the Soviet government announced that it had reached an agreement with Iran under which Soviet troops would immediately start a withdrawal. This would be completed within five or six weeks on the condition that nothing unforeseen happened. The American and British governments refused to accept Moscow’s unilateral statement, especially the condition attached to the withdrawal agreement. Accordingly, when the Council assembled, their representatives pressed for the Iranian complaint to be heard without delay.

After a short meeting on 25 March, the Council’s subsequent meeting quickly developed into a long debate as to whether the Iranian complaint should be admitted to the agenda. Gromyko argued that there was no reason to admit the item as the bilateral negotiations had been satisfactorily completed and the troops would be withdrawn. Byrnes countered by arguing that as Iran had not withdrawn its complaint the Council should hear the Iranian representative. Cadogan supported Byrnes. Australia’s representative, W.R. Hodgson, agreed that the Iranian item should be admitted to the agenda as it fell within the Council’s function and had been presented in the proper form. As part of Australia’s procedural campaign, his contribution was “calculated to emphasise the judicial character of the Council’s proceedings”.

In the face of this opposition, Gromyko changed tack by proposing that consideration of the item be postponed until 10 April. Egypt, supported by the United Kingdom and the United States, put forward
a counter-proposal that the Iranian representative be heard before the Council considered the question of adjournment. It was at this stage that Hodgson, following direct instructions from Evatt, took an independent initiative to institute regular and methodical procedures for the Council. He agreed with the majority of representatives that the item be admitted, but argued against rushing into a general discussion of the merits of the question which might prove prejudicial to the final outcome. Instead, he suggested that the Council follow the procedure, prescribed by Evatt, to postpone consideration of the item until such time as the Iranian government had submitted a documented case. Only then should the request for an adjournment by the Soviet Union be considered. This would constitute only a short delay. During the period that these procedural requirements were being fulfilled, Hodgson proposed that the status quo in Iran be maintained by undertakings from both parties to the dispute that they refrain from taking any action to alter the existing situation. Poland supported the Australian proposal. During the debate, Hodgson covered the points made in Evatt's written and oral instructions. He reiterated that Australia was prepared for the Council to hear a factual statement from the Iranian representative, but would prefer a written submission, a procedure that would prevent the Council from discussing the merits of the case before all the facts had been discovered. Faced with these three different proposals, the Council failed to reach a decision either that day, or through the overnight deliberations of a French inspired sub-committee.

After a lengthy debate on the following day the Soviet resolution finally was defeated. At this stage, Gromyko created a sensation around the world by walking out of the Council. Evatt's worst fears seemed about to be confirmed. However, the Council continued its meeting, passing the Egyptian resolution, with seven votes in favour, but with Australia and Poland voting against. With the acceptance of the Egyptian resolution, and following a procedural blunder by Hodgson, the Australians were forced to accept that their proposal on procedure had been excluded and no vote was called. The Council then invited the Iranian representative, Hussein Ala, to read a statement about the bilateral negotiations with the Soviet Union. The Australian delegation believed its stand on principle and procedure was swiftly justified when Ala's statement extended to the merits of the case, leading Byrnes to
caution that the Iranian representative’s remarks should be limited to the question at hand.\textsuperscript{32}

Over the succeeding days, discussion and diplomacy both inside and outside the Council centred on the dramatic Soviet walkout and a possible resolution of the crisis. Evatt instructed his representatives to oppose the holding of any private sessions of the Council and to continue to press for acceptance of his procedural proposals. But he warned his representatives to avoid isolating Australia in the Council by refraining from making any positive proposals unless they believed they had some reasonable degree of support. Following these instructions, Hodgson continued to raise Australia’s concern over procedural questions during the ongoing deliberations.\textsuperscript{33}

The British were taken aback by Australia’s independent initiative as they believed that “the effect of [the Australian] procedure would nevertheless be to give [the] Soviet government the breathing space the latter needed to bring further pressure to bear on the Persian Government”. In private discussions, Hodgson and another Australian representative at the United Nations, Paul Hasluck, rebutted the views of their British colleagues by arguing that the procedure adopted by the Council had precipitated the crisis. They claimed that eventually the Council would be forced to accept something similar to the original Australian proposal, having in the meantime only succeeded in alienating the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the Australian representatives claimed that if events led the Council to fail to make a decision until around 10 April the Council would simply “look foolish in the eyes of the world”.\textsuperscript{34}

Within the Foreign Office there was concern that the Australians had, in effect, supported the Soviet policy of delay. One official, J.G. Ward, noted that “the matter is of importance as on Australia’s attitude in the final show-down a good deal might depend”.\textsuperscript{35} The Australian delegation had consulted closely with the British delegation in New York, but had not warned them of Australia’s independent initiative. By cable, the Australian government forcefully stated its view to the British government that “a quick decision on the Persian issue is less important than a long term solution based upon a full investigation of the facts in accordance with an orderly method of procedure”. In reply the British government argued that the main objective should be to secure the withdrawal of all Soviet troops at the earliest possible
moment, claiming that the course of action being suggested would protect the jurisdiction and prestige of the Security Council. At the meeting of the Council on 29 March, an American-initiated compromise solution was accepted under which the Soviet Union and Iran were requested to advise the Council by 3 April as to the current state of their bilateral negotiations, including details as to whether any conditions attached to the agreement about the withdrawal of Soviet troops. If satisfactory replies were received, the American delegate suggested that an investigation of the substantive issues might not be necessary, provided the Council reserved the right to take up the matter should any development threaten the withdrawal. Hodgson accepted this compromise.

By 3 April, it was obvious that the Australian campaign to regularise the Council’s procedures had been thwarted. Evatt’s proposal for a committee of enquiry of Council members that did not include the interested parties (and did include Australia) was not raised formally as there was no support for this suggestion by the other delegates. The proposal to further investigate the Iranian complaint was not considered necessary by the other Council members who were prepared to accept the replies of the Iranian and Soviet governments as a sufficient basis to proceed to resolve the dispute.

The crisis abated on 4 April when the Security Council, after receiving notes from both the Iranian and Soviet governments, accepted that the two governments had reached an unconditional agreement for the Soviet troops to be withdrawn by 6 May. In the preceding days, Byrnes had drafted a resolution taking note of the bilateral agreement and deferring further action until 6 May when both parties were to report on whether the withdrawal of the Soviet troops had been completed. Evatt was not satisfied with Byrnes’ approach as it did not accord with his vision of the Security Council acting as a security tribunal. Evatt had given Hodgson strict instructions not to participate in private executive meetings except when they dealt only with procedural matters. He was determined to stop great power deals being done behind closed doors. When Byrnes raised his resolution in a private session of Council members on 3 April, Hodgson rose to leave, explaining his government’s instructions. However, Byrnes pressed Hodgson to stay, arguing that he was only suggesting a possible procedure that might be followed in the Security Council. Hodgson
was persuaded to remain, but made no further contribution to the meeting. Cadogan commented: “His attempt to depart was abrupt and took the Council by surprise. It would have created undesirable com-
motion if it had been persisted in.”

The following day, in a final act of disapproval at the course of events, Hodgson emphasised Australia’s stand on procedure by abstaining from voting for Byrnes’ resolution in the Security Council. Hodgson had been anxious that Australia’s independent stand was leaving Australia isolated and friendless, but Evatt’s instructions were firm and precise. With the Soviet Union still absent the resolution was carried by nine votes in favour, none against, with Australia alone abstaining. The United Kingdom, Egypt, Brazil, Mexico and France and even Poland, Moscow’s constant supporter during the dispute, not only spoke in favour of the American resolution, but also endorsed the procedures that the Council had adopted in dealing with the dispute. During the debate, Hodgson, who had been instructed by Evatt by telephone from Australia the previous night, stated the Australian government’s view that the procedure adopted by the Security Council had not been sufficiently judicial in character. Hodgson criticised the Security Council for proposing to adopt an interpretative resolution without proper investigation, for not fixing permanent and proper procedures, for not applying the principles of the Charter and for failing to depart from the old methods of diplomacy. The Soviet Union also came in for criticism by the Australian delegate for damaging the prestige of the United Nations by its walkout from the Council.

Elco Van Kleefens, the Netherlands delegate speaking after Hodgson in the debate, firmly refuted Australia’s criticism of the Security Council’s actions arguing that the Australian approach “could only give to the labours of the Council an academic quality”. Byrnes also defended the process the Council had followed, impressing upon the Council that it was the settlement of international problems by peaceful means, not rules of procedure, that mattered.

Although the crisis abated with the agreement between the Soviet and Iranian governments over the withdrawal of the Soviet troops, conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States continued in the Security Council. The Soviet representatives demanded that the issue be removed from the agenda, while the Americans sought its retention as a way of maintaining the pressure on the Soviet Union
during the period its troops were being withdrawn. Australia supported the United States as it agreed that, as a quasi-judicial tribunal, once a matter was brought before the Security Council it was for the Council, not the parties to the dispute, to decide whether the matter should be dropped from the agenda. 42 This was a clear demonstration that Evatt was not being guided by considerations of power politics, but by his desire to introduce legal and liberal internationalist principles into the handling of international disputes.

These events provide further evidence of the truly independent nature of Australian foreign policy under Evatt with Australia being prepared to take on all the Great Powers in its attempts to make the Security Council an international security tribunal. Fraser Harbutt is wrong to claim that “Australia, self-consciously representing independent small powers, took occasional unilateral initiatives but in fundamental questions joined the other seven against the Soviets”. 43 This was not the case. Evatt was pursuing his own agenda not that of the other western nations. Ben Cockram, the Dominions Office representative in New York, advised London that Australia’s independent initiatives had “fallen completely flat”. The Australians, he argued, had pleased none of the parties to the dispute and had succeeded only in annoying the Americans and the Russians. He attributed this to Evatt’s attempt to dictate the tactics of the Australian delegation from the other side of the world. 44 But Cockram’s criticism was based on a misunderstanding of the central purpose of Australian policy. Evatt and his officials were not trying to win favour with its great and powerful friends or secure alliances by paying the premium of loyalty. Evatt’s policy was not pro-British, nor pro-American, but neither was it pro-Russian. He was attempting to institute new means to order and regulate international relations. An approach based on multilateral organisations, the concept of collective security, a system of international law administered by security tribunals, with it all preserved by the weight of world opinion. Motivating the Australian campaign for regular procedures was its desire for a “new world order” in which small powers would no longer be vulnerable to Great Power politics. The Australians hoped that such a “new world order” would give small powers the additional protection that had been so wanting during World War II.

In complete contrast, the United Kingdom placed the emphasis of
its policy on more traditional principles of international law, specifically respect for treaties and the right of sovereign nations to be free from outside interference. Shaping British policy was the imperative of forming a coalition with the United States to meet the perceived threat from the Soviet Union. The survival of the United Nations as an effective instrument in international affairs was a much lesser priority. Throughout this crisis, Evatt was concerned that the action being taken by the United Kingdom and the United States might force the Soviet Union out of the United Nations altogether. There was always the possibility that the United Nations Organisation would suffer the same fate as its predecessor the League of Nations.

To some extent, Evatt's policy was also influenced by his legal training and judicial career. But it was not simply a case of transferring the role of law from the domestic to the international sphere. His instructions during the Iranian crisis reflected his attitude that the law could play a positive, interventionist role in changing the condition of humankind. He wanted an investigation conducted to discover the fundamental causes of the Iranian dispute. Only when all the facts had been discovered did he believe that a permanent settlement could be decided upon. Such an approach is more in tune with European legal tradition which has an investigatory function, rather than the adversarial nature of the British legal system. Evatt had been a judge on the High Court of Australia for ten years prior to his election to the Federal Parliament in 1940, during which time he had been prepared to go beyond strict legal interpretations of the constitution to take into account the social and economic consequences of his judgments. As such, he was somewhat of a heretic among his fellow judges. In this context, it is significant that Evatt referred to equity and justice, not the formal law, when instructing his representatives of the approach the Council should adopt. This is not to deny that Evatt was heavily influenced by his legal training and career in the British system. But as John Burton has argued, Evatt was convinced that international conflict could be resolved only if the root causes were identified and if the solutions decided upon satisfied the basic needs of the peoples involved.

Evatt’s legal experiences reinforced his belief that proper process and the rule of law could and should replace the anarchy of international power politics.

In seeking to institute these procedural measures, Australia was
criticised by Byrnes and others on the Council for being too academic in wanting fixed procedures to deal with such disputes. These criticisms, which were later echoed by Paul Hasluck, certainly carry weight in this specific example.\(^{47}\) There was no doubt that at times the Australian representatives appeared to be too rigid in their determination to institute regular procedures. But the accommodation that the Great Powers reached over Iran was not to be repeated often during the cold war. Australian policy was to institute a procedure that would be applied in all cases, whether they could be easily settled or not. In the longer term, Evatt's approach would have provided a more useful precedent than the ad hoc procedure actually followed. There are limits to a "realist" foreign policy as well as to an "idealist" foreign policy. It should also be noted that Evatt saw his policy towards the United Nations and collective security as complementary to other sources of security for Australia. These included Commonwealth defence on a regional basis, an alliance of equals with the United States, a "firm" peace settlement with Japan, increased domestic defence spending and close and friendly relations with both the colonial powers and the emerging nations of Southeast Asia.\(^{48}\)

At this time, the belief that the Security Council would be an effective instrument for preventing international conflict was held not just by Evatt, Burton and the idealists within the Department of External Affairs, but also by more conservative Australians. Paul Hasluck's book, *Workshop of Security*, written shortly after his resignation from the Australian Diplomatic Service in 1947, was a plea to make the Security Council work as a tool for maintaining world peace or face the ultimate destruction of humanity in the next war. Despite his criticisms of Evatt, Hasluck argued that a degree of idealism was necessary if the Security Council was to function effectively.\(^{49}\)

Australia's stand on principle at the Security Council received a mixed response from the American press. Sumner Welles, the American politician, wrote in the *New York Herald-Tribune* that Australia had made the "most notable contribution" of the smaller nations. The *New York Post* recorded that, "The Australian Delegate came closer than any other delegate of speaking the thoughts of people the world over, who hope so mightily the United Nations will achieve a rendezvous with destiny, and banish War for all times." Although Byrnes also received praise from the American press for his statesmanlike solution,
commentators such as Drew Pearson pointed out that Australia’s initial proposal was indirectly responsible for breaking the deadlock. The American press reaction to Hodgson’s criticism and abstention at the Council meeting of 4 April was reported as being “not unsympathetic”. But there was some criticism. The New York Times argued that an investigation of the Iranian dispute of the type sought by Australia would have delayed any settlement and aggravated the crisis, while the Herald-Tribune disputed the Australian view that the Council was a judicial tribunal.50

In Australia, Evatt’s activities attracted criticism from the conservative Opposition parties. As was nearly always the case, Australian policy was judged not on the merit or effectiveness of the policy, but on its alignment and loyalty to that of its “great and powerful friends”.51 This view was also expounded by the editor of the Argus who deeply regretted that Australia had not voted with the United Kingdom and the United States. Although the Sydney Morning Herald criticised the Chifley government for being too rigid in pursuing a methodical procedure in the face of such an explosive situation, it and the Age reported fully both the positive and negative reviews Australia’s lone stand on procedure had received in the world’s press.52

Although Evatt had failed to influence directly the course of events, he was successful in keeping the idea of the United Nations acting as an international security tribunal before world and local opinion. Even the critical Paul Hasluck concluded, “The grand design for making power subject to principle had not been perfect but at least the principles were being constantly affirmed. The Charter was still being used as a standard of reference in the conduct of international affairs.”53 This in itself was an important achievement for which Evatt could take some of the credit.

In the end, an evaluation of Evatt’s attempt to shape the Security Council as a security tribunal and to apply a system of law to the resolution of international disputes rests upon differing views of the very nature of humanity. At its most fundamental level, Australia’s policy towards the United Nations was based on what Manning Clark described as Evatt’s belief in the perfectibility of man. Evatt was indeed a true believer in the Enlightenment. Clark places Evatt with the radical intelligentsia of his day who believed that “as bad conditions were the cause of evil, good conditions would make men good”.54 The breadth
of the United Nations Charter, which not only attempted to order the great issues of peace and war, but also covered economic, social, health, educational, cultural and colonial matters, both reflected and drew inspiration from such beliefs. If only the root causes of war could be removed, and if only the circumstances of international friction could be fully investigated and rationally discussed, humankind would not turn again to force in order to resolve international conflict. These were the beliefs that underpinned Evatt’s policy. If, as many of his critics have claimed, he was naive, unrealistic and wrong in these beliefs, his failings should fill all with gloom and despair. In the end, Evatt’s policy was a victim of the Cold War — the very “power politics” that he found so repugnant.
The standing of Australia, and of its External Affairs Minister, H.V. Evatt, in Indonesian eyes was enormously enhanced by Evatt's support of the Indonesian case at the United Nations in 1948 and 1949 in the face of the provocative “police actions” (in effect, large-scale military operations) against the nationalists. Evatt championed the Indonesian cause against the forces of Dutch imperialism, thereby establishing a basis for Australian–Indonesian friendship that subsequent developments over the next four decades have never been able to eliminate entirely.

By 1947 Dutch intransigence could hardly be denied, just as it was difficult to refute the claims of the nationalists to some degree of effective control over significant parts of Java and to a lesser extent Sumatra. By then, too, Prime Minister Chifley had put paid to any hopes that Evatt might have entertained of creating a major Australian presence in the southwest Pacific, so that without denying the ideals which undoubtedly animated Evatt’s views on the future of the East Indies, there were also practical reasons which helped shape his approach. Australian policy towards the question of the future of the Netherlands East Indies was not quite as straightforward during the war or in the immediate postwar period as its later actions might suggest.

Although it was well understood by all the western powers, colonialist or not, that the collapse of resistance to the Japanese in late 1941 and early 1942 had irrevocably changed the perception of western prestige in the east, it was not clear that these setbacks necessarily spelled the end of empire. Churchill was not alone in proclaiming that he did not intend to preside over the dismemberment of Britain’s empire: this was a sentiment echoed by all leading Dutch and French political figures as well. The Atlantic Charter, Churchill made clear to Roosevelt, was not intended to apply to the colonial peoples ruled by
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European powers. While Roosevelt rejected this interpretation and pressed the Dutch, for example, to spell out the extent of the reforms they intended to make in the NEI once Japan had been defeated, the American government refused to accede to Mountbatten’s request at the beginning of 1944 that US political affairs officers be attached to South East Asia Command, and made no attempt to interfere in the Dutch application of the Civil Affairs Agreement signed between the Dutch and MacArthur’s South West Pacific Area Command in December 1944. Indeed, as these two instances suggest, even before the change of theatre boundaries in July 1945, the United States was anxious not to get involved in questions relating to the post-war political development of areas which it already considered to be peripheral. By the time Japan had surrendered, and the NEI had been transferred to the British-dominated South East Asia Command, American reluctance was unmistakeable, and US policy towards the NEI was barely helpful to any of the directly interested parties.

Australian interests were several. Evatt was intensely critical of Dutch efforts to defend the Indies in 1941 and 1942, arguing to Stanley Bruce that its failure to make any save the barest provision for the defence of Timor and Dutch New Guinea had had “dire consequences” for Australia. This failure on the part of the Dutch, he told Parliament in October 1943, made it necessary for Australia to play a much greater role in the southwest Pacific in the post-war era, to ensure that never again would Australia be threatened from the north. Secondly, Evatt had a genuine concern for the welfare of colonial peoples, and sought to ameliorate their position as far as possible. This did not necessarily mean that the colonial empires would be replaced, as the United States wanted, but that the forms of colonial rule would be changed to accommodate far more the aspirations of the subjects rather than the self-aggrandisement of the metropolitan powers and their local representatives.

Notwithstanding the poor military performance of the colonial powers against Japan, Evatt and his Department felt as late as 1944 that Dutch rule would be restored to what it had been before the war. Australia’s actions, he therefore felt, should be aimed not at challenging Dutch rule itself, but at exerting a benign influence on the nature of that rule. If Australia extended all possible aid and comfort to the Dutch military, political and economic efforts in the war against Japan,
it would then be in a position to demand a formal role in the postwar development of the NEI.

The Australian government's policy of aiding the Dutch war effort took very practical forms. In February 1942 two air training schools were turned over to the Colonial Dutch Army air corps, so that by the beginning of 1944, over 1000 Dutch airmen had been trained in Australia. In early 1943 the War Cabinet acceded to a Dutch request for Australia to provide the ground staff to support the bomber and the fighter squadron which the Dutch had formed for use in the South West Pacific Area.\(^5\)

The area where Australia had the greatest potential for assisting the Dutch was in the provision of facilities for training and equipping Dutch land forces. This was also the area which was politically most sensitive, for the reimposition of Dutch colonial rule on the East Indies was largely dependent on the support of allies, or at the very least on their acquiescence. Although American political opinion had been reassured to some extent by Queen Wilhelmina's statement of December 1942 on post-war developments in the NEI, the thrust of American military operations was increasingly away from the NEI. Certainly for MacArthur, Java and Sumatra became more and more peripheral in his strategic thinking, the realisation of which pushed the Dutch into seeking other channels of assistance. In September 1943, trying to bypass the opposition they anticipated they would encounter from the Combined Chiefs of Staff, and especially from the American government and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Dutch approached the Australian military staff in London to enquire if arms and other military equipment could be obtained from Australian sources for eventual use in operations in the NEI. The Australian government insisted that all such requests be sent through the Combined Chiefs of Staff, whereupon the Dutch dropped the matter.\(^6\)

A year later, the Dutch again approached the Australian government, asking for its agreement to the "arrival, accommodation, training and maintenance of a force of about 30,000 men" in Australia.\(^7\) Opinion within the Australian government was divided. External Affairs, hoping to establish Australian credentials for a greater role in the NEI after the war, and hoping also in the shorter term to improve the Australian position in forthcoming talks with the Dutch, supported the Dutch request.\(^8\) The Defence Department, however, preferred that Australian
resources be used to assist British operations against Malaya and Singapore, not least because it suspected that the Dutch proposal was aimed at building up forces to be used for internal security purposes rather than to help defeat the Japanese. These reservations were overridden by the War Cabinet, which approved the proposal “in principle.” When External Affairs conveyed the decision to the Dutch, it omitted to mention that the commitment was not a firm one, and proceeded to do its best to lock the War Cabinet into a position from which it would not easily be able to retreat. The Dutch followed suit, and prepared to send several thousand troops from Britain to Australia, while the British government was prevailed upon to provide accommodation and initial training. At the Australian end, External Affairs smoothed the way for the arrival of the Dutch forces by waiving passport requirements.

This attempt to establish Australian support for a Dutch return to the East Indies was blocked by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, who ruled in April 1945 that European troop requirements had to take precedence over Dutch colonial plans. That setback, however, seemed only temporary, because the Combined Chiefs had intimated that once the requisite troop levels in Europe had been achieved, movement to Australia in addition to the 4000 internal security troops that had been approved would be possible. At the same time an Australian government report concluded that the burden on Australian resources could be accommodated within the government’s manpower requirements and demobilisation programme. In June, the Australian Commander-in-Chief, Blamey, assured the Dutch Commander-in-Chief, General van Oyen, that only the details remained to be settled, and agreed to support van Oyen in pressing Eisenhower to relax his stand on the release of Dutch troops for service in the Indies.

Within weeks of Blamey’s assurance, the Australian government changed its position, or rather, did not proceed to act upon its previous “in principle” agreement. More careful consideration of the manpower implications of the Dutch proposal led Prime Minister Chifley, who had always opposed Evatt’s schemes to establish a much wider postwar Australian sphere of influence, to conclude that Australia could neither offer support to the Dutch by way of facilities and backup staff in Australia nor could it participate in the post-surrender phase in Dutch Borneo. The Dutch were outraged by this decision, and complained
that they had been deceived. Chifley's reply that the "advice tendered to you on a lower level [i.e. by External Affairs] could not take into account the overall picture" did not satisfy them, and from this point on, they regarded Australia as fundamentally hostile to their interests. Evatt's hopes that strong support for the Dutch military effort might bring political influence had come to nought.

In any case, the Dutch steadfastly refused to concede that Australia had special interests in the NEI. When Evatt suggested in a public speech in New York in April 1943 that "the NEI and Australia can become great partners in developing and bringing about a better way of life to the peoples of Indonesia", he was promptly rebuffed by the Dutch legation in Australia. As if to reinforce their claim to exclusive control of the postwar East Indies, the Dutch took several steps in late 1943 to prepare for their eventual return. In October, External Affairs was told that van Oyen would shortly be arriving in Australia to take up command of Dutch forces in the South West Pacific Area, and more to the point that he "would be in charge of ... post-war reconstruction". Further enquiries established that van Oyen in fact had no role in postwar reconstruction, but this incident alerted External Affairs yet again to the fact that the Dutch had plans of their own that in no way recognised Evatt's proposals for a postwar Australian role in the NEI.

A much more serious threat, in Evatt's eyes, was the decision of the Dutch government-in-exile in London to return Dr Hubertus van Mook to Australia to resume his position as Lieutenant Governor-General of the NEI and to reorganise the NEI administration in Australia to prepare it for an early resumption of political control in the East Indies. Van Mook had arrived in Australia in March 1942, but his pleas to the Dutch government in London to be authorised to establish an NEI government-in-exile in Australia had been viewed with suspicion, for it was thought that such a move might weaken metropolitan control over the Indies.

In May 1942 van Mook was recalled to London and made Minister of Colonies, an appointment that was designed in part to align him more closely with the colonial policy of the Dutch government. That policy, as least as it applied to the NEI, had been spelled out in the broadcast made by Queen Wilhelmina in December 1942, and van Mook had been deeply involved in its drafting. It was vague in the extreme, and despite van Mook's attempts to assure American reporters in particular
that it represented a real advance in the political status of the NEI, the Dutch prime minister insisted that it in no way diminished the power of the central government over colonial affairs. Van Mook’s return to Australia as head of an NEI government-in-exile therefore posed a major threat to Evatt’s plans.

Rather than see such a presence in Australia, Evatt urged Bruce in London to impress on the Dutch government the necessity for it to attend his, Evatt’s, proposed Pacific Conference, where the future of colonial territories such as the NEI would be discussed. Not content with trying to prevent the establishment in Australia of an NEI government-in-exile, Evatt suggested to Bruce that the best course would be for the Dutch to cede to Australia a long lease to the NEI without surrendering Dutch sovereignty. This, he insisted, “would achieve a diplomatic result of tremendous importance to the future security of Australia”.18 When Bruce replied that it was by now too late to prevent the Dutch going ahead with their proposal, Evatt threatened to refuse them permission to domicile their government-in-exile in Australia, but eventually bowed to the inevitable, fearing that further obstruction might endanger the prospects of his Pacific Conference.

When van Mook did arrive, he took it upon himself to emphasise to Evatt that his “government” would consist only of himself and a small council of heads of departments.19 Curtin insisted that this was only an “administration”, but Evatt, determined to push his plans despite the rebuff he had received from the Dutch, welcomed the Dutch initiative and looked forward to close cooperation between Australia and the NEI on a range of post-war issues.20 Those hopes were subsequently dashed.

As the prospect of military operations against Japanese forces in the NEI drew nearer, the dilemma of the Dutch grew stronger. They appreciated that they could not alone liberate the East Indies but they were unwilling to pay the political price that support from countries such as Australia apparently entailed. In September 1944 Evatt suggested bilateral talks on postwar issues affecting the NEI, but planning for them bogged down over procedural matters, the Dutch insisting on an Australian affirmation of the territorial integrity of the NEI, while External Affairs adamantly refused to issue such a statement.21 Eventually it needed Evatt’s personal intervention to settle the agenda, but when the talks were held, in January 1945, the Dutch again refused to
concede a formal Australian role in the postwar NEI, preventing even mention of the question in the communique that the Australian government later issued. Nor did Evatt fare any better at the San Francisco Conference in April 1945, where the Dutch firmly rejected as a “retrograde step” his proposal for an international trusteeship to administer dependent territories such as the NEI. This was hardly unexpected, not least because Evatt had consistently “antagonized the Dutch delegates by successively ignoring, intimidating or being openly hostile towards them”.

Within four months of the San Francisco Conference, the position had changed radically. The proclamation of the Indonesian Republic on 17 August 1945 confronted the Dutch with a situation they had never anticipated. Now, rather than returning in the wake of an American operation, and drawing on US military and economic largesse, the Dutch were beholden to the British, for the NEI had been transferred from SWPA Command to South East Asian Command at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945. At such a moment, with British forces fully stretched, Australian military support might have lent weight to its political pretensions, as Evatt had argued during the war. But this was not to be, for two weeks after the Japanese surrender, Chifley announced that the Australian government expected the colonial powers to resume their responsibilities as soon as possible, and refused to extend Australian military involvement in the NEI beyond its very limited commitment to Borneo, Sulawesi and the eastern islands.

This decision did little to establish Australian claims to a significant voice in southwest Pacific and southeast Asian affairs. The Dutch saw the Australian refusal to become further involved as a continuation of their efforts to hamper the Dutch military return, while the British, at both Prime Ministerial and Supreme Allied Commander level, reacted with dismay to Chifley’s stance over the Esperance Bay repatriation of former Indonesian political prisoners. Nonetheless, External Affairs, in Evatt’s absence in London, continued to push the Australian case for a special role in the NEI, arguing that Australia had “vital security interests in fostering a liberal settlement ... in this area”. Evatt, however, urged caution, fearing that if the Dutch were pushed too hard, they might continue to refuse to hold discussions with the Indonesian nationalists, thus precipitating a full-scale civil war “which will require very considerable military effort to settle”. When shown the draft of
a note that External Affairs proposed handing the Dutch, detailing the assistance that Australia had already made to the Dutch cause and deploiring the cooling in relations, Evatt replied that he was “very surprised and concerned at the idea of sending such a note at the present time. It can only do harm and may do considerable. At a later stage the question may possibly deserve reconsideration.”

Evatt was anxious not to create a breach with the Dutch, for he hoped that Australia might yet play a mediating role. Chifley, however, was less attracted to that possibility, and sought to establish a degree of Australian influence through British channels, insisting to Attlee that Australia had vital interests in the NEI that entitled it to be consulted on developments there. He specifically rejected the view of Mountbatten’s political adviser, Esler Dening, that the question of the future of the NEI was one to be settled between the Dutch and the nationalists.

The British position confirmed the wisdom of an earlier Australian decision to send a political representative to Mountbatten’s staff to ensure that Australian political interests were not overlooked in what appeared to be a shift of British policy towards total support of Dutch authority. Van Mook, now back in Batavia, tried to block the appointment, but was unsuccessful, and on 7 November 1945, W. Macmahon Ball arrived at Batavia.

His appointment coincided with a growing split between Mountbatten and his political masters in London. The British government increasingly argued that the maintenance of law and order and the fulfilment of the primary task of repatriating former prisoners of war and internees required the firm British backing of the Dutch, for until a measure of calm could be established, there was no likelihood of successful negotiations being started. In such circumstances Prime Minister Attlee felt that to refer the dispute to an external body such as the United Nations, or to raise the trusteeship proposal, would merely inflame the nationalists’ demands and encourage them to play for time. This was not Mountbatten’s view. Much closer to the events on the ground, he was well aware that if the forthcoming negotiations broke down, his own forces would be unable to control the situation. In those circumstances, he felt, there were only two options open to the British: either there would have to be an increased military commitment, which would necessarily include American forces, or a settlement would have to be imposed by the two external governments most
closely concerned, the United Kingdom and Australia. His military commander on the spot in Java, Lt General Sir Philip Christison, objected to the political advice he was receiving, preferring instead to seek a solution through the United Nations, but he felt obliged, in the final analysis, to bow to expert opinion.

Ball quickly reached the conclusion that "British apathy[,] ignorance and misinformation about the Indonesian movement make it especially desirable that some other third party or United Nations enquires", adding that "collective responsibility and collective action is so urgent here", thus allying himself with Christison against British political opinion, both in London and in South East Asia Command. That division in views was reinforced by a dispute over procedures, with Dening insisting that Ball could discuss with the Indonesians only those matters approved by Christison (and in effect, therefore, by Dening) and further demanding that he, Dening, approve all cables that Ball intended sending to Canberra. Ball protested strongly to External Affairs, which supported his stance, to the point of considering recalling him on the grounds that he could not perform his duties properly if subjected to such restrictions. Although Evatt was not directly involved in this wrangle, he would clearly have supported Ball and the Department, on the grounds that it was precisely this exclusion or subordination to the policies of the great powers that had moved him to champion the rights and interests of the small and middling powers.

Alerted to the suggestion that a third party such as the United States might be prevailed upon to intervene, Evatt was quick to put paid to that possibility, arguing that the US government would be "very loath" to become involved, even though it might choose to intervene. Support for the Dutch would expose Washington to accusations that it was backing an unworthy imperialist regime, while if it sought to back the nationalists, it could be accused of interfering in another country's internal affairs. In any case, Evatt added, there was widespread support within the United States to bring American servicemen home as quickly as possible.

If direct American military intervention was ruled out, Evatt was anxious that the conditions be created in which the Australian government could press for a settlement to be arrived at by the interested
external powers, that is, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia. The only way this could be done, he argued,

is by a well prepared and well reasoned public statement indicating that this is the policy of the Australian government and that the government has an obligation to make sure not only that the security of neighbouring countries should be protected against external aggression but also that the basic institutions in such countries should be such as will best promote the security in the region to which they belong which can hardly be expected in the present circumstances.

Australia, he insisted, had a "real and tangible interest" in the NEI, not least because, as he had emphasised on several occasions, "the only portions of Dutch territories which were liberated prior to the armistice were those liberated by the Australian troops in Dutch Borneo and Dutch New Guinea." Since he understood that these sentiments were shared by the Australian government, Evatt urged it to issue a statement to that effect: "what reason is there for saying it privately and refraining from saying it publicly?" 37

There was no immediate reply from Canberra, and ten days later Evatt raised the question again. By then British attempts to convene talks between the Dutch and the Indonesians had proved fruitless, and Evatt was concerned that this breakdown would lead to a large scale British military effort, possibly drawing on Japanese forces to assist in suppressing the nationalists, which would produce a "legacy of hatred" in southeast Asia and create difficulties for Australia in its post-war relations with the region. "These are now all matters of great urgency", he wrote. 38

Evatt's draft statement, which he submitted to Chifley for his approval, since it was "a matter of extreme delicacy", contains the best summary of his view of the development of the Indonesian situation up to this time. It was a remarkably balanced and fair assessment of the position in the NEI, and bears examination at some length. It began by restating Australia's vital interests in the region, referring to the part that its military forces played in the liberation of parts of the Indies, but stressing that Australia nevertheless felt it could "approach the present involved situation in a disinterested spirit":

We seek no exclusive advantages of any kind. Our interest in the region lies in security and also in order, provided it is founded on justice, welfare, progress and the satisfaction of legitimate political aspirations.
Before this could be achieved, however, Evatt insisted that "certain salient facts" had to be acknowledged by all parties before any real progress could be achieved.

First, the problem of the large number of armed Japanese soldiers in Java had to be solved: they had to be disarmed by South East Asia Command as part of the conclusion of the war against Japan, and this, Evatt wrote, was a "paramount fact and no opposition to this operation can be countenanced". Second, the many thousands of allied prisoners of war and internees had to be brought to safety, and "the Indonesians [had to be held] collectively and individually responsible for each single prisoner and internee". Third, while the sovereignty of the Netherlands was internationally recognised, the Dutch themselves had accepted the principle of the movement towards self-government, but neither this principle nor the process by which it might be altered could be allowed to interfere with the primary task of concluding the war against Japan, that is, by disarming Japanese troops and repatriating POWs and internees. The military and political situations had become inextricably intertwined, and great care had to be taken not to confuse the issues further. To this end Evatt recommended that Dutch forces not be allowed to land on Java, and that on the other hand the new Indonesian cabinet headed by Sjahrir complete its dissociation from Japanese influences, which had cleared away some of the collaborationist charges attaching to its predecessor under Sukarno. While the United Nations charter recognised the principle of self government, the rights of the Dutch in developing the NEI to their present position could not be ignored, and due compensation for property and investment would have to form part of the basis for any future settlement. The situation that had emerged was both dangerous and complex: dangerous in that it threatened to "drift into large scale warfare", thereby disrupting the essential tasks of repatriation and rehabilitation; and complex in that it had developed "beyond a point where it could be regarded as solely a matter of domestic jurisdiction of the recognised sovereign state".

To break the military and political deadlock which had arisen, Evatt suggested that the Australian government propose an immediate thirty days' truce in Java; that no Dutch forces be landed during that period; that Dutch, Indonesian and Australian political representatives (and, for military matters, SEAC authorities) meet continuously within a
week of the beginning of the truce in order to arrive at a satisfactory political settlement; that the Indonesians assume responsibility for all POWs and internees under their control; that the Indonesians cease accepting arms from the Japanese; and that the Dutch declare an amnesty for all revolutionary acts on the part of Indonesians, with the exception of "war crimes or crimes normally punishable under the criminal law". 39

These were sensible proposals. The essential task of repatriation of POWs and internees had been disrupted, sometimes with horrible results, by the conflict between the Dutch and the Indonesians; the disarming of the Japanese had been too slow, so that four months after the end of the war the vast majority still retained their own arms and had little prospect of immediate repatriation; the Dutch, despite their later reservations, had accepted in the 1942 royal proclamation the principle of self government for the NEI; and the general situation had deteriorated to the extent that it was no longer possible for the parties immediately involved to arrive at a settlement except by resort to open war.

These assessments could hardly be contested. What was notable about Evatt's proposal was his suggestion that in order to win over the United Kingdom, the Australian government should offer not only to extend its military commitment to Borneo, which Chifley earlier had insisted be phased out as soon as possible after the Japanese surrender, but that Australia should provide a military force to be sent to Java to supervise the repatriation of allied POWs and internees. This would free British forces of the charge that they were using this work to pave the way for the return of the Dutch. "This is an important feature of [my] proposals," he emphasised, "and if adopted there must be no doubt as to it being carried out." But, he added, "I understand public feeling in Australia would approve proposals of this kind." 40

This was a dubious assertion. There had been considerable public support in Australia for the waterside workers' refusal in September to load ships bound for the NEI, and the strike had been called off only after the government had intervened to make sure that ships bearing military supplies would be loaded by Dutch labour. Evatt himself had drawn attention to the American concern that its troops be brought home, yet he seemed oblivious to the fact that similar sentiments were just as strong in Australia. When Ball visited Morotai and Borneo, he
reported that “if the impressions I gained are correct, then any Australian Government which sought to transfer our troops to Java instead of bringing them home would be faced with a major domestic crisis”.\(^{41}\) (In fact, the implication of Evatt’s proposal was not that the troops in Borneo would be moved to Java, but that they would be retained in Borneo while an additional force would be sent to administer the repatriation programme in Java. Presumably the domestic political impact would have been all the greater.)

On 26 November Chifley replied to Evatt’s cable. While agreeing with his assessment of the importance of a solution in terms of Australian security interests, he rejected Evatt’s proposal that the Australian government should issue a statement. Cabinet, he advised, would not agree to the commitment of a force to Java, and there might even be difficulty in persuading it to accept an extension of the troops in Borneo. Unless Australia could undertake to assume some responsibility for enforcing any settlement that might be negotiated — that is, unless it was willing to commit military forces to Java — it would not be practicable to offer to be a third party mediator, since the United Kingdom would probably call on Australia to help police any Dutch-Indonesian agreements. “I do not think the present is the time for either a statement or an offer of mediation,” he concluded.\(^{42}\)

This rejection ought not to have come as a surprise to Evatt. Chifley had long opposed his plans to create a sphere of influence to the north of Australia, and had insisted on the early resumption of colonial responsibilities by the metropolitan powers so that Australian servicemen could be brought home and the nation’s attention turned to postwar reconstruction. More immediately, in early November, the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, John Burton, had advised Evatt that Chifley “strongly believes we must avoid giving impression we are prepared to intervene in ways other than diplomatic. General approach we are following is to stress vital interests but to keep free of military obligations.”\(^{43}\) The British Chiefs of Staff had raised the possibility of military assistance from the United States or Australia, but the Foreign Office had suggested that the introduction of Australian troops into Java might bring “undesirable political complications”, while the Dominions Secretary, Viscount Addison, had advised against making such a request on the grounds that “we should only get a peremptory refusal and the approach would do more harm than good
Evatt had urged Chifley to take the high moral position of making a statement of principles, even if it did not succeed in achieving its goals, but Chifley chose to act only if there was a reasonable chance of success. "Absence of a statement," he assured Evatt, "... [does] not mean lack of attention to [the] problem."

When Evatt returned to Australia in January 1946 after an absence of five months, he sought to resurrect his initiative on Indonesia. The United Kingdom government announced in January that the former ambassador to Moscow, Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, would be appointed to chair talks between the Dutch and the Indonesians. This prompted Ball's successor as Australian Political Representative at Mountbatten's headquarters, J.C.R. Proud, to urge that a senior Cabinet minister be sent to Batavia "to discuss matters with him [Clark Kerr] on equal terms" and to offset advice from Dening, who attached little importance to the Australian point of view. The Dominions Office rejected the implied Australian claim "to be regarded as the principally interested party", and warned:

the despatch of an Australian Cabinet Minister to Batavia would be a sensational act most unwelcome to the Dutch as well as ourselves, and would create not only an international incident of some delicacy but might well jeopardise any hopes of Sir A. Clark Kerr's intervention proving successful.

Evatt himself never appeared in Batavia, but he did appoint Keith Officer as Australian Political Representative in South East Asia with the rank of Minister, with special responsibility for reporting back to Canberra on the progress of the Dutch-Indonesian negotiations. However, in announcing the appointment, which did not in itself advance any special Australian claims, Evatt implied that Officer would "assist" Clark Kerr as an equal, thus offending both the British and the Dutch. Further, he exposed the growing rifts, not to say contradictions, in the Australian policy, for while he was arguing for a privileged place for Australia at the negotiations, Chifley was becoming more openly critical of the Dutch and, by implication, of the British. In any event, the negotiations quickly deadlocked, and nothing was gained by Officer's presence.

By the beginning of March 1946, hopes of an early settlement in Indonesia had been abandoned by virtually all parties. The Dutch
appeared intransigent, the Indonesians irresponsible and unrealistic, and the British desperate to be rid of the whole problem. Australia, and Evatt, had been relegated to where they had in reality always belonged — on the fringes. Despite Evatt’s dreams, Australia had never been in a position to take a leading role in the Indonesian dispute in its early stages. Evatt had supported the Dutch war effort in the Pacific to the best of his ability, but had been unable to win any political concessions from the Dutch by way of recompense. There was a period, for several months immediately after the Japanese surrender, when the commitment of Australian troops to Java might have stabilised the situation sufficiently to enable clearer heads on both sides to prevail and to allow Evatt’s proposals to be adopted. But the Australian government, reflecting what it took to be the popular will, refused to assume such responsibilities, and handed the question back to the larger powers to settle as best they could, all the while claiming that it had special interests that had to be protected.

Although he failed in this first stage of his involvement in the Indonesian issue, Evatt could not be blamed. He had grasped the essential issues that were at stake, and his proposals were not without value. If he had any complaint to make, it should have been that he had been sidelined by his own government, and that his campaign to win a role for small and middling powers in the great issues of the day had been damaged, if not lost, at home.
On 25 September 1947, the United Nations General Assembly was convened into an ad hoc Committee to discuss the future government of Palestine and elected Dr Herbert Vere Evatt, Australia’s External Affairs Minister and United Nations Delegation Leader to the Chair. At the conclusion of the Committee’s deliberations two months later, majority agreement was reached to recommend to the General Assembly the partitioning of Palestine.

The partition plan, which Dr Evatt had supported in the ad hoc Committee, had been previously proposed by the majority of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), which had been authorised to investigate the issues surrounding Palestine’s political settlement and to make recommendations to the General Assembly. The plan envisaged the creation of separate Jewish and Arab States, tied in an economic union and the establishment of the city of Jerusalem under an international regime. When UNSCOP came to sign its report two months earlier, Australia, as a member of the eleven-nation committee, abstained from supporting either the majority recommendations or the dissenting minority report which had proposed the constitution of Palestine as a federation of separate Jewish and Arab provinces with Jerusalem as the capital.

Evatt’s involvement in the Palestine Question had, until the publication of the separate biographies by Kylie Tennant and Alan Renouf, attracted little research. This has probably been a reflection on the unavailability of Australian records. Tennant and Renouf observed that Evatt played a leading role in the development of the plan to partition Palestine. This, they argue, was based on his sense of justice for the Jewish people. Tennant claimed that Evatt’s view was simple: “Six million Jews had died in Europe and the Jewish people must have a
place of sanctuary. As Chairman of the Palestinian Committee, he had been very active." Renouf agreed, pointing out that "No better testimony exists to Evatt’s pursuit of justice than the part he played in the establishment of the state of Israel", claiming that, when Britain referred the Palestine problem to the United Nations in April 1947, "Evatt was instrumental in having the Assembly set up a committee of investigation." These brief comments, together with reports that the Jewish population of Israel regarded Evatt “as almost a modern Messiah”, imply that Evatt was committed to the establishment of a separate Jewish homeland in Palestine based on the pursuit of justice in international politics, and that he shaped Australian policy accordingly. They also imply that Evatt actively developed acceptance at the United Nations for the proposal. Evatt buttressed these perceptions with his own account of the events as retold in The Task of Nations where his role as chairman of the ad hoc committee on Palestine took on magisterial proportions:

I entered upon the work of the Committee without prejudices in favour of any particular solution. However, I carefully studied all the relevant documents and listened with the greatest of attention to all the arguments.

The Tennant/Renouf thesis appears to have been based on personal observations and perceptions. Kylie Tennant was a friend of Dr Evatt and his family, while Alan Renouf, as a young cadet in the Department of External Affairs, was on Evatt’s personal staff and was with Evatt at the United Nations during the 1947 debate on Palestine. However, their broad generalisations are not supported by archival evidence. Recently opened Australian archives confirm Evatt’s support for the plan to partition Palestine which led to the creation of Israel, and that his attitude was based on the objectives of the United Nations Charter and the application of the principles of justice in international policies. But the records also reveal that Dr Evatt was concerned to maintain the objectivity and procedural correctness of the Chair and supported partition because it had attracted United States–Soviet accord and was likely to be supported by the majority of the Assembly and “seems to offer the best of difficult alternatives in the circumstances existing”. There are indications that prior to the vote at the General Assembly, Australian Prime Minister Ben Chifley was not enthusiastic about any Australian involvement at the United Nations and would have pre-
ferred Australia to maintain a neutral position. But to Evatt, abstention was anathema and would be perceived as an abdication by Australia of its responsibility to the processes of the United Nations. Thus he urged the Prime Minister to give his benediction to partition. Evatt believed that a United Nations solution to an important international problem which had evaded a major power, the United Kingdom, would be an important victory for the United Nations and as such would consolidate its status. As Chairman of the ad hoc Committee on Palestine, Australia’s prestige as well as his own would be enhanced, giving him leverage to negotiate a Pacific defence pact with the United States as a more equal ally. Thus Evatt pressed this position as much to show commitment to the consolidation of the status of the fledgling world body as for any particular commitment he had to find a Jewish homeland.

Although the Department of External Affairs files hold lengthy reports from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry urging Australian Government support for the creation of Palestine as a Jewish Commonwealth and intervention with the United Kingdom on the question of Jewish migration to Palestine, these representations were not pursued. Perhaps it was because they were also critical of the United Kingdom and its administration of the Palestine mandate. The records show that not only was Evatt’s role functional in nature but that he neglected the opportunity to make a significant contribution to a matter of international importance — the shaping of the Palestine policy at the United Nations. However, it is also important to note that Evatt was not an independent player in matters of Australian foreign policy at the United Nations. In the case of Palestine, Evatt was compelled to seek Chifley’s approval before an Australian commitment was made.

**Historical Background**

The events of 1947, which led the British government to relinquish its League of Nations Mandate over Palestine and the subsequent debate at the United Nations which resulted in the adoption of the plan to partition the territory into separate Jewish and Arab States, is a complex story with an extensive literature that is outside the purpose of this paper to rehearse in any great detail.

Briefly, the United Kingdom had administered the territory of
Palestine under a League of Nations mandate confirmed by the Council of the League on 24 July 1922 as the result of the Allied carve-up of the former territories of the Ottoman Empire. Under the mandate, which also contained the terms of the Balfour Declaration, the British government was obliged to give special consideration to the creation of a Jewish national home without prejudicing the religious and civil rights of non-Jewish communities in Palestine.

After World War II, the constant illegal entry into Palestine of displaced European Jews surpassed the British quota for legal Jewish immigration. The increasing numbers of Jews exacerbated the already strained relationship between Britain as the mandatory power and the Arab population of Palestine who were agitating for independence. A British blockade against illegal Jewish migrants was ineffectual against the numbers of illegal ships and this in turn sparked off increasing violence between Arabs and Jews and both groups against the British administration.

British tolerance of illegal Jewish migrant ships reached its lowest ebb with the arrival of the Exodus in 1947. Despite the presence of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, British troops clashed with the passengers, resulting in the death of some. Despite past practice of detaining illegal migrants in camps in Cyprus, the Exodus was forced back to Europe and the passengers into the camps from which they had come. The plight of the Exodus served to increase the determination of displaced Jews to enter Palestine.

Conflicting British commitments demonstrated the difficulty of administering the mandate, particularly as Arabs and Jews demanded full control of the territory. If the United Kingdom gave Palestine to the Arab majority, a Jewish national home would probably not eventuate. If on the other hand it gave Palestine over to the Jews, the Arabs would take direct action, not the least of which would be economic sanctions against British oil pipelines which stretched across the Middle East. Nor could the United Kingdom extricate itself from the mandate under its own initiative without some loss of prestige and influence in the Middle East. These circumstances led the United Kingdom to turn to the United Nations for a solution.

On 2 April 1947, the Permanent United Kingdom Representative to the United Nations, Sir Alexander Cadogan, requested the Secretary-General to summon a Special Session of the General Assembly "for
the purpose of constituting and instructing a Special Committee to prepare for the consideration of the regular session the future government of Palestine". The Arab states individually requested the Secretary-General to place on the same agenda an item which sought the “termination of the Mandate over Palestine and the declaration of its independence”.

The Arab item was defeated during a debate in the Political and Security Committee of the General Assembly (the First Committee). This allowed for the constitution of an eleven-nation special committee (UNSCOP), comprised of so-called neutral states representing a geographic spread, to enquire into the issues surrounding Palestine's political settlement and to make recommendations to the General Assembly. Australia was one of the eleven.

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**Australia and UNSCOP**

Dr Evatt was not personally involved on UNSCOP, but had sent instructions to the Australian Delegation that the “main purpose of Australian participation in a Special Session should be to secure [a] place on [the] investigation committee and if we would be assured of election to [a] more limited committee we would favour it”.

The previous departmental Secretaty, Colonel W.R. Hodgson, was leading the Australian delegation to the Special Session of the General Assembly when it opened on 24 April 1947 to discuss the formation of a Special Committee of investigation. Hodgson moved quickly to support the United States proposal for a geographically comprehensive ten-nation Special Committee of so-called neutral States, against an Argentine resolution embodying the Big Five. Speaking to an Australian amendment, Hodgson criticised moves to involve the Big Five, reminding members that it was “one of the first occasions in the history of the United Nations when two of the great powers, the United Kingdom and the United States, say to the rest of us, you have talked a lot about our failure to reach agreements, now here is a chance for you to accept real responsibility. We feel the responsibility should be accepted.” However, Hodgson was stunned to discover Australia was not among the suggested “neutrals”, noting that Europe, Latin America and the Arab States were represented but “the rest of the world is eliminated”. Hodgson’s call could well be perceived as signalling a
strong Australian desire to speak in its own right and to distance itself from British policies.

In the event, Australia was elected onto the Committee. However, it was the reality of the time that Australia was hampered by its historically close association with Britain. Indeed, the representative of Guatemala had later written an account of UNSCOP's activities in which he observed that the Australian official J.D.L. Hood "had been among the most reticent member of our committee. In our debate I thought he had shown himself concerned lest we step upon Britain's toes". Although the records do not indicate that Australia was acting under dictation from Britain, there is also no evidence that Hood's cautious approach was decreed by the Minister, or the Department. Yet, it is hardly surprising that an Australian diplomat of that period would not be critical of the United Kingdom in a forum mainly composed of States with whom Australia had little in common. Justifying his stance, Hood complained that the Committee attempted to interfere in the local administration of justice; with some members, notably Yugoslavia, Uruguay and Guatemala, regarding the Committee as a "super Royal Commission charged with investigating and passing judgment on the history of the administration by the Mandatory".

However, Hood's uncommitted posture did not prevent him from making critical first-hand observations in a report to Canberra. His analysis was as a result of UNSCOP's investigations in the Middle East and the displaced persons camps in Europe which led Hood to conclude that the solution to the question of Palestine was neither obvious nor at hand. He noted that "the problem seemed more intractable and potentially dangerous than had appeared during the debates of the Special Session". Hood expressed concern that the "Palestine situation may become a threat to the peace of the world and is at present a focus of infection extending beyond Palestine into the Arab world and into the Anglo-American-Soviet Union rivalry".

Hood observed that the United States' attitude was still obscure, with a divergence in opinion between the White House Administration, which supported Jewish immigration into Palestine "for local political reasons", and the State Department, which leaned toward the Arab point of view owing to "oil, the political importance of the Arab League and the Moslem people in the Middle East and the established policy of attempting to halt the spread of communism".
Hood advised Evatt that the United Kingdom had “not so far made clear its proposed attitude to the question in the General Assembly”, but the likely influential factors were the strategic importance of Palestine and of Middle East oil interests. Despite the lack of a clear United Kingdom policy, he reported that some of the Commonwealth nations were already expressing a point of view. South Africa’s Field Marshal Smuts, for example, supported partition; India was likely to come out in favour of the Arabs, while Canada and New Zealand “will in general support the United Kingdom”. As far as the other blocs were concerned, there seemed little doubt that the Asian countries would lean towards the Arab case and many of the South American nations would adopt a neutral stand.20

Evatt was warned that “immediate and prolonged bloodshed” would follow in the wake of the British departure from Palestine, particularly if “an unfavourable verdict” was rejected. Nor was the notion of a unitary state considered by Hood to be an option. He claimed that the conflict between Jews and Arabs “appears to be so deep-rooted and the Arab determination to prevent further Jewish immigration so adamant that co-operation in one State seems to be too remote a possibility”.21

In the circumstances, Hood recommended that Australia should favour partition. The attitude of the Australian delegation should be to support a General Assembly recommendation to the United Kingdom to submit a trusteeship agreement for Palestine. This would allow for an interim period of about six months in which time the United Kingdom would continue as the administering authority until the transfer of complete self-government to the Arabs and Jews for their respective States.22 Hood’s comprehensive report to the department appears to have been filed without any comment, as there is no record of any instructions being sent to him. Despite the comprehensiveness of his report, and apparently being bereft of instructions, Hood arrived at the signing stage as the only delegate on UNSCOP to abstain from supporting either the majority recommendations of the Committee or the dissenting minority report.23

It is likely that Hood considered it diplomatically prudent to abstain at that early stage in the investigations, particularly as the report from New York indicates that officials were well aware that Australian attitudes at the United Nations should be governed by full enquiry into
the facts and the law before submitting to any recommendation. It would have been inappropriate for Hood to act without ministerial instructions, yet the records do not indicate any instructions being issued to him.

As the only undeclared delegate, Hood explained to UNSCOP that he believed it was not to be the task of the Committee to make recommendations, that "the primary obligation of the Committee in respect of the General Assembly is that of a recording, reporting and a fact-finding function". While he agreed that the Committee had wide powers and could propose recommendations, he believed that the final determination of the two propositions should rest with the General Assembly.

Curiously, there was no comment in the External Affairs publication, *Current Notes on International Affairs*, which described UNSCOP's activities but made no mention of Australia's voting position or its likely future attitude. However, a press statement issued later from the office of the Minister for External Affairs indicates Hood was in line with the usual Australian stance at the United Nations, as it noted:

Neither of the plans proposed by the Special Committee was supported by the Australian representative on the grounds that it was the responsibility of the General Assembly itself to make the final decision.

With the benefit of Hood's first-hand analysis, why did Australia abstain from committing itself, particularly after Hodgson's heroic speech which had led to Australia being added to UNSCOP in the first place? It is quite probable that it was for the publicly stated reason. Evatt was aware that the Committee's recommendations were meant for wider debate at the General Assembly at which he would be present. Evatt's caution could also have been due to the fact that Palestine had not been considered in Cabinet. This seems to indicate that neither Evatt nor his Department had developed a Middle East policy. Added to this was Evatt's knowledge that the Prime Minister was keen to have Australia remain uncommitted on the issue of Palestine.

Perhaps more importantly, Evatt was anticipating election to the presidency of the 1947 General Assembly, and may have preferred to appear even-handed on what he admitted to be a complex matter that was "likely to impair friendly relations between several nations". Evatt had been assured by United States officials that they would
campaign on his behalf for the presidency. In their report to the State Department, America’s UN delegation noted that:

Evatt is known to have the support of the British Commonwealth States, some of the Scandinavian States, and probably a number of other countries. He established himself at San Francisco as the champion of the smaller powers and has wide popular support. Because of his drive and energy Mr. Evatt would undoubtedly be a good President. He would be effective in rallying world opinion in support of strong and affirmative General Assembly.\(^{30}\)

Attaining the General Assembly presidency through United States support was important to Evatt, who hoped to develop a system of regional security in co-operation with the United States and other allied nations.\(^{31}\)

Despite his hopes of succeeding to the UN Presidency, finding a solution to the question of Palestine was not top of Evatt’s busy agenda. Apart from being External Affairs Minister, Evatt was the Attorney-General and in 1947 was involved in the prolonged bank nationalisation case. Moreover, Australia was an active member of the United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans, and the Greek question was assuming a greater focus than the question of Palestine in an Australian Parliament where both the government and the opposition were heavily preoccupied with the spread of communism.\(^{32}\)

Although, as a member of UNSCOP, Australia was well placed to raise its international profile by making a contribution to solving the Palestine problem, Evatt did not lead Australia down that path. Instead, he appears to have been more concerned with style rather than substance while waiting in the wings to see how the situation would unfold at the General Assembly.

**Evatt and the Ad Hoc Committee**

When Evatt arrived in New York on 15 September 1947, he was preoccupied with the elections to the General Assembly presidency,\(^ {33}\) which he lost later to a Brazilian candidate. He was also concerned with the mood around the United Nations which he described as one of “brooding hostility and suspicion”,\(^ {34}\) with the UNSCOP findings having outraged the Arab states who were threatening economic sanctions against the United Kingdom and the United States.\(^ {35}\) Also, the Arab League had issued a communique stating that they would fight,
if necessary, to prevent the implementation of the UNSCOP proposals, “as well as of any other measure which do not ensure the independence of Palestine as an Arab State”. 36

There was no doubt in Evatt’s mind of the importance of the Palestine question. It was a major international dispute involving an important power, particularly one with close links to Australia. Indeed the world press had already dubbed Palestine the major issue confronting the General Assembly that year, and the number one “headache” for the United Nations. 37 Therefore, Evatt’s invitation to chair the ad hoc Committee on Palestine could be seen as a valuable consolation prize for missing out on the UN presidency.

While Chifley would have preferred Evatt to maintain some distance from direct involvement, Evatt was in no doubt about the eminent status of the ad hoc committee and the prestigious role of the chairman. As the ad hoc committee comprised the entire General Assembly, it allowed members the opportunity to focus on Evatt’s chairmanship capacity. He wrote later that part of his failure to gain election to the Assembly presidency was due to his neglect of a number of General Assembly meetings “and there were many delegates at New York who had taken no part whatever in the conference at San Francisco”. 38

It is not apparent that Evatt perceived his role to imply a commitment by Australia to any administrative role in Palestine. He was aware of Chifley’s view against the use of Australian troops in Palestine. Evatt’s knowledge of United Nations procedures ensured his confidence to pursue style and thereby raise Australia’s profile on committees while cautiously determining the degree of Australia’s commitment to an issue of no direct relevance to Australia. He later assuaged the Prime Minister by emphatically stating in a cable that “Australia has not been suggested as one of the commission for Palestine administration and I entirely agree that we should not repeat not be included”. 39

In addition to the Palestine Committee, Evatt was also juggling a number of other United Nations committees. The Greek question alone had consumed the General Assembly. Evatt later recalled that, “There was no certainty that the Assembly could even complete its business without an open break between the Eastern and Western groups.” 40 Other pressing matters were Indonesia, Korea, war propaganda and the Little Assembly. 41 In a personal cable from New York to his depart-
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mental secretary, John Burton, Evatt confessed that "working on two or three Committees at the same time is almost too much", particularly as Renouf had noted that during the 1947 General Assembly Evatt did not have the benefit of experienced staff with him in New York. Together with his busy agenda, Evatt may have preferred to adopt a policy of waiting and seeing how the problem would evolve before making a commitment.

Evatt’s busy agenda, and his insistence on a full inquiry into various questions in international politics, suggests that Evatt formed his conclusions only after a case was fully heard at the United Nations. This was true in the case of Palestine. Also, his desire to take “a purely objective view as Chairman” appears to have acted as a restraint on any Australian membership of the subsidiary committees which were formed to debate the various political options. His apparent preference to play a reactive role was vindicated when the Soviet Union adopted partition as its preferred option for Palestine, an option previously endorsed by the United States. Evatt now told Canberra that he was satisfied that:

in the light of United States and Soviet declarations there is every indication that the principle of partition will receive [at] the least majority support in the Committee. The only flat opposition so far has come from the Arab States and Pakistan, India and Afghanistan.

If at any time Australia was involved in a lobbying effort in the corridors of the United Nations, it is conceivable that this was to secure the two-thirds majority for the partition plan, the outright favourite. The forging of the United States–Soviet accord was likely to produce this outcome and to prevent Palestine from becoming another Cold War casualty. The two superpowers were therefore elected onto the same sub-committee to develop the UNSCOP majority proposal. A second sub-committee which consisted mainly of the Arab states did not go beyond discussing the declaration of Palestine’s independence as a unitary Arab state.

Although Evatt avoided Australian involvement on any of these committees, the general committee resolved that the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and the Rapporteur should conciliate between the feuding parties. There is no evidence of either of the two protagonists being willing to enter into discussions with this group. Evatt did, however, introduce an amendment to what was being referred to as the
“Soviet–American plan”.47 After what appears to have been a direct request to Evatt by Cardinal Spellman of New York, an Australian amendment was carried which had the effect of preserving the freedom from discriminatory taxation for owners and occupiers of “Holy places religious buildings or sites” in both the Jewish and Arab states and also in the city of Jerusalem.48 It was the only occasion on which Australia broke its silence on matters of policy.

The Australian amendment was introduced on 24 November, two days before the vote in the ad hoc committee and Evatt’s departure from the United Nations. On that same day, Evatt sought Chifley’s approval for Australia’s support for partition. He informed Chifley that “a course of abstention in the vote is the worst to follow as it would tend to lead to a situation of abdicated responsibility on the part of the United Nations”. Evatt also pointed out that a commitment to partition was in keeping with “Majority of United Nations Commission” and that Australia had “consistently stuck to the practice of accepting clear majority reports after a thorough investigation by a competent commission of the merits of the case whether made under the auspices of the Security Council or the Assembly”.49

Evatt had been consistent in preparing the way for the acceptance of partition by the Prime Minister. About ten days before the vote, he sent a cable to Burton confiding that it would be practically “impossible to refrain from voting on the plan as roll call vote will be called”. He justified partition as the only fair and just solution: “the fact is that today there are two small nations in the Palestine area and for the time being they cannot live or co-operate together under one Government”. Also, partition “may well be a nucleus of a future federation between the two states”50 and “seems to offer the best of difficult alternatives in the circumstances existing”.51 In a contemporary Bulletin cartoon, Evatt was portrayed as the mediator between Jews and Arabs.52 While the cartoon was meant to be disparaging, it picked up the perception Evatt wanted to create and which he repeated in his own record for posterity.53

On 26 November 1947, the ad hoc committee came to the vote. Partition was supported by Australia and carried by twenty-five votes to thirteen. Immediately after the vote, Evatt left New York while the resolution was debated in plenary session. At the final vote in the General Assembly, Australia maintained its position on partition. The
Australian Ambassador to Washington, Norman Makin, who had been with Evatt at the General Assembly, assured Chifley that:

Dr. Evatt had consultation with myself regarding the matters of our vote. We both strongly agreed that abstention would leave the worst impression possible, particularly with roll-call vote. Partition seemed only course and should simplify the position of United Kingdom.54

Tentative Conclusions

On the basis of available archival sources, Dr Evatt could not be assessed as making an historic commitment to developing a Middle East policy. The records show his role was that of a witness to an event, an objective moderator on United Nations procedure, and a staunch supporter of its processes and recommendations. Judging from parliamentary debates and Cabinet documents, the formation of a Palestine position was not an issue which preoccupied government or the parliament as both the government and the opposition appeared united in their refusal to commit troops to police Palestine. The opposition was also adamant that Evatt should not conceive of any other position but support for that of the United Kingdom’s; a position with which Chifley would have been comfortable.

There emerges, also, a question mark over the degree of autonomy which Evatt could exercise in the making of foreign policy decisions. It is true that Evatt finally convinced Chifley to accept partition, but it was not done without some effort. The regularity and nature of the cable traffic from the United Nations indicates this. Moreover, there is no evidence of any Australian statements made during the debate at the General Assembly, although the files contain a number of statements made by Canada and the United Kingdom, thus indicating an Australian desire to exercise caution. That Evatt remained uncommitted until the eve of the vote in the ad hoc Committee suggests that the Australian delegation could not have engaged in an active lobbying effort in the corridors of the United Nations, particularly as the Prime Minister had yet to bless the partition option.

In addition, Evatt showed a strong desire to be in line with the position adopted by the United States after it had chosen to campaign actively for his election to the 1947 General Assembly presidency. His perception was that the presidency would enhance his and Australia’s status in negotiating a Pacific defence pact with the United States and
the United Kingdom, suggesting that the focus of Evatt’s concern was regional issues while allowing the lead for a problem which had no direct bearing on Australia to come from others. Notwithstanding his political aspirations, Evatt’s support for partition was in keeping with his articulated foreign policy goals, namely, the application of the principles and objectives of the United Nations Charter, including the pursuit of international justice and respect for the equal rights and self-determination of peoples.

Evatt’s support for partition also demonstrated his grasp of the interdependent issues which impact on the making of international and foreign policies. With the intensification of the Cold War, and the preoccupation in parliament with the spread of communism, Evatt welcomed United States–Soviet accord over Palestine.

Although Evatt may have been concerned to demonstrate an independent Australian stand at the United Nations, Australia’s international status in 1947 was not sufficiently significant to allow it to sway world events or to make a significant contribution to a perplexing international problem. In the case of Palestine, the United States–Soviet accord virtually guaranteed the support of those who came within the sphere of these two powers. In as much as there is a story to be told of Dr Evatt’s role on the question of Palestine, the story that has emerged is one of cautious participation, or — as one of Evatt’s ambassadors has suggested — one of “helpful neutrality”. 55
On Wednesday, 9 February 1949, shortly after 4 p.m., Arthur Augustus Calwell rose from his place on the government front benches of the Australian House of Representatives. It was his first opportunity to address the House on an issue which had captured national and international attention in the preceding week. As Minister for Immigration, Calwell was preparing to deport an Indonesian woman and her children from White Australia.

The Jacob family had arrived in Australia in 1942 after fleeing the Japanese advance. Mr Jacob had soon after commenced work for the Netherlands Indies Army Intelligence Service which had re-established itself in Australia after the capitulation of the Netherlands East Indies. Jacob, however, was killed in a military air crash leaving his wife to manage their eight children. The landlord of the Jacobs' home in the Melbourne beachside suburb of Bonbeach was John O'Keefe, a retired postal clerk. O'Keefe gave much assistance to the Jacobs and his relationship with the family culminated in his marriage to Mrs Jacob. Consequently he sought permission for his wife to remain in Australia.

The Immigration Department saw the marriage as a flagrant attempt to subvert Australia's restrictive Immigration Act and so began a long struggle with the O'Keefes. The O'Keefes were aided by a young Dutch consular official in Melbourne, who, without any authority from his own government, impeded attempts by the Department of Immigration to deport the family. Calwell saw the action of the Dutch consular official as not only obstructing the Immigration Act but indicative of Dutch actions in Australia, which he saw as particularly anti-Labor — a result of the Chifley government's support of the Indonesian Republic.
The O'Keefe case gained international attention in the early months of 1949 when Calwell served the O'Keefe family with a deportation order. The threat of deportation quickly gained press interest and wide support for the O'Keefe family to be allowed to remain in Australia quickly followed. To Calwell, however, the O'Keefe family were simply "stooges" of the Dutch and the whole incident created by the Netherlands government to damage Australia's reputation in Asia as a supporter of Asian nationalism by highlighting the racist aspects of the country's immigration policy. In Calwell's eyes the attack by the Dutch was well timed, coming on the eve of Australia's attendance at the New Delhi Conference which had been called by Nehru to attempt to resolve the Indonesian question.1

Calwell in his speech on 9 February took the opportunity not only to explain his department's view of the case but also to make a scathing attack on the Dutch government. He attacked the Dutch as inhuman colonial masters and potential wreckers of the New Delhi Conference, and accused Dutch officials in Australia of conducting a propaganda war with the assistance of the federal Opposition, aimed at damaging Labor's chances of re-election in the 1949 poll.2

The speech outraged the Dutch Minister to Australia, Dr Petrus Ephrem Teppema and his officials in the legation in Canberra. Until the day before the speech, the dispute had not been touched upon, or included in, any foreign policy discussions — in keeping with the Australian insistence that the White Australia policy was outside foreign policy concerns.3 Indeed it was also a matter the Dutch considered outside the scope of their official concern. Teppema had been quickly alerted to the speech and heard most of Calwell's scathing attack. That night he made some notes about Calwell's assertions. On consideration, a protest to the Australian government seemed the only appropriate course of action. The following morning he rang the Minister for External Affairs, Dr Herbert Vere Evatt, requesting an interview. One hour later he was sitting in Evatt's office.

So began a controversy which captures a foreign perspective of H.V. Evatt and Australian foreign policy in the final year of the Chifley Labor government and in Evatt's final months as a government minister and President of the United Nations General Assembly. This analysis of those events draws upon documents held by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to paint a portrait often less than flattering of the
then Minister for External Affairs. Evatt's behaviour in the O'Keefe case creates a dark picture that biographers and former colleagues have previously identified or alluded to. This perspective is unusual, however, because it comes from a foreign, non-English speaking source. Indeed it could easily be argued that this perception of Evatt as Minister for External Affairs is more important than many of its domestic counterparts. He was, after all, seen in the international community as representative of Australian desires and directions.

Teppema made notes of his meeting with Evatt on its conclusion and they were subsequently sent to The Hague. On entry he had immediately apologised for not having visited Evatt sooner, after the Australian minister's return from overseas. He had wanted to exchange views on recent events in Indonesia, but regretted that the immediate reason for his visit was Calwell's speech of the previous afternoon. Evatt replied that he had not heard the speech but knew of the incident. Thereupon Teppema produced his notes and read the relevant passages of Calwell's speech which attacked Dutch officials in Australia and the Dutch government generally. Teppema had taken his notes to support his complaints and show that a protest had been carefully considered after scrutiny of what Calwell had said.

Evatt interrupted Teppema and asked if he could read the notes himself. When he completed reading the notes, Teppema told him the purpose of his visit "was to lodge a strong protest". He described Calwell's outburst as "hitting below the belt" and that the heads of several foreign legations had also been struck by the ferocity of the attack which could only have been "delivered by someone who was animated by intense hatred of the Dutch". Evatt said he greatly regretted the incident, laying sole blame for the outburst with Calwell, assuring Teppema that:

Calwell's speech is a disgrace and frankly I am horrified. He is a wild man and an extremist who causes us no little concern.

Teppema responded by mentioning the work that had been done in 1948, much of it at Evatt's initiative, to improve relations between the two countries, but that Calwell's speech "had demolished everything". Evatt conceded the incident had flared at a time when both governments were trying to repair the relationship. Teppema felt compelled to ask which department was in control of Australia's foreign relations — Immigration or External Affairs? Evatt did not respond, leading
Teppema to say he had no official interest in the case, but that if Mrs O’Keefe was a British subject the normal procedures in accordance with the regulations in force should be followed. Evatt responded: “She is.”

Teppema continued that the situation could have easily been resolved through discussions between legation and Australian officials instead of Calwell making wild statements to the press and attacking the Netherlands in the House. Evatt responded that it was the Prime Minister, not he, who was responsible if a minister of the Crown ventured into the field of foreign affairs and that often these statements were “calculated to embroil relations with a foreign government”. Teppema responded, “Do you realise that as Minister for External Affairs you are now left with the broken china?” Evatt responded that he was “terribly sorry” about what had happened. Teppema expressed his “deep regret” at the situation also but did not know what he could do about it. He remarked, “Evatt, this affair is your baby, you’ve got to do something to remove the false impressions Calwell’s speech has made.” With a cough, Evatt conceded it was his baby.

Teppema insisted that quick action was needed because press reports of the speech would already have reached Holland and Indonesia. Despondent, Evatt murmured “the daily dogs”. Teppema responded that such a result was unavoidable because the speech made first class copy. Evatt did not answer and the two men sat in silence until Teppema continued, saying it would be presumptuous of him to tell Evatt what he should do, but that surely the only recourse was a statement to pour “oil over the water”. Why weren’t the Dutch doing the same with the Indonesian question, Evatt snapped. Teppema said that he would be available to discuss the Indonesian question, but he wished to confine himself to the immediate reason for his visit.

Rather than returning to the issue, however, Evatt matter-of-factly remarked on the way Dutch officials in Australia were closely associated with the federal Opposition — one of Calwell’s main assertions and a charge Teppema had thought Evatt had just dismissed and apologised for. It was, however, an allegation Teppema had heard on many occasions since his arrival in 1947. He told Evatt he had no knowledge of such collusion and asked him if he were thinking of anything in particular. Evatt responded that he did not remember exactly but that was the impression. Angered, Teppema defended his
legation against the charge, asserting that his present staff did not have any "undue" contact with Opposition members and if there were such individuals he wanted their names. Evatt spoke of the "propaganda stuff" being released which he traced to the Dutch Information Office. Again, however, Evatt could not recollect where he had seen such propaganda or its contents, pointing only to the fact it had been brought to his attention by Cardinal Gilroy's secretary. Teppema insisted he would have the matter investigated, stressing he read all press releases from the legation and had never come across one that the Australian government could construe as an attack.  

Evatt's tone and manner suddenly changed. He remarked jovially that Teppema was taking the matter too much to heart and that he should forget it and think about his daughter's imminent wedding. Teppema responded that the old Dutch proverb held "Duty before the girl" and that Calwell's statement was too serious to brush aside. Evatt, however, continued to discuss the wedding, telling Teppema that he and his wife would be attending and that Mrs Evatt had gone to Sydney to buy a wedding present. Teppema responded that his daughter and fiance had received the gift and were very touched by the Evatts' generosity. The meeting ended with Evatt telling Teppema he would give a toast at the wedding to Queen Wilhelmina before the King's toast. He assured Teppema it was the way that reception formalities should be started and he was the man to start them.  

Teppema left the meeting with mixed feelings. He had considered an informal friendly approach the best way to speak to Evatt on an obviously contentious issue. Evatt's rejection of responsibility was not unusual and was to be expected. He was aware that, despite his ideological motivations, Evatt was more sympathetic to the Dutch in Indonesia than most of his parliamentary and cabinet colleagues, and it would do the Netherlands a disservice to put him offside. He also discounted Evatt's observation that Chifley may have sought to worsen relations. Although aware Chifley was not greatly impressed with Dutch actions in Indonesia, he was certain Calwell's outburst was not at the instigation of Chifley, who would be annoyed at the situation resulting. What concerned Teppema most was Evatt's apparent reluctance to act. He was still amazed at the way in which ministers would attempt to avoid ministerial responsibility at any cost and how they enjoyed attacking their colleagues in private — something he consid-
ered a peculiarly Australian pastime — but would not launch such criticisms into the public arena. It was blatantly obvious that Evatt regretted the incident but Teppema, while acknowledging a possible reluctance to publicly criticise another minister, could not understand why he appeared to shy away from any action.

On leaving Evatt’s office Teppema was hounded by the press for a comment but declined, believing it would be improper for him to make any statement before Evatt. He hoped Evatt would publicly acknowledge his protest and at least apologise for the tone of Calwell’s outburst, if not vindicate the Dutch from involvement in the affair. Teppema prepared dispatches to be sent to Batavia and The Hague explaining the situation, and noting that he had lodged a “powerful protest” at the “thoroughly violent” anti-Dutch statements of Calwell. He conveyed Evatt’s regrets at the incident and offered the view that Calwell’s handling of the incident had destroyed any chances of its satisfactory resolution. Patiently, the Dutch legation awaited a public statement by Evatt.

No such statement, however, was forthcoming. In the House that afternoon Calwell made another attack on the Dutch. Surprisingly Evatt made no statement to the House or the press on the issue in general or Teppema’s protest. Not prepared to wait any longer, Teppema asked the legation’s First Secretary, A.M. Hasselman, to release a press statement. At 3:45 p.m. Hasselman telephoned the President of the Canberra Press Gallery to issue a press release which announced that “the Minister visited Dr Evatt this morning to enter a strong protest against certain statements made by the Minister for Immigration and Information in the House of Representatives yesterday”. Teppema hoped Evatt would be compelled to act when the Dutch protest had been made public.

On Friday the 11th, most metropolitan morning papers ran a story on the O’Keefe affair and referred to the Dutch protest. In the House that afternoon, the Opposition seized on the issue. Deputy Opposition Leader Harrison asked what was the nature of Evatt’s meeting with the Dutch Minister and whether, in view of the serious nature of Calwell’s remarks and the possibility of international complications, Evatt had made any assurances to the Dutch Minister. Alternatively had he told the Dutch that the remarks represented government policy? Evatt simply replied that he had met with Teppema, that no official action
had been taken by the Dutch, that they had had "a friendly conversation covering a wide field" and that he was "very disturbed that such a call should be accentuated and exaggerated in order to cause embarrassment between this Government and the Government of the Netherlands". When later asked if Calwell's speech was to be regarded as the voice of the Australian government in foreign affairs, Evatt replied that the question had already been answered. To add insult to injury, Calwell launched another verbal attack on the Dutch in the same session.16

Teppema was as unsatisfied with Evatt's comments in the House as was the Opposition. He was surprised by Evatt's claim that no protest had been lodged and annoyed that Evatt had obviously not approached Chifley to silence Calwell. With the publication of the press release and Evatt's comments, the inconsistency between their portrayals of the meeting was readily apparent. Soon after the papers hit the street, the Dutch legation received a call from External Affairs to the effect that Evatt was livid. In his opinion, the press statement should not have been issued because Teppema's protest had not been lodged in a manner appropriate to an official protest.17

Confounded by Evatt's view, and wondering what course of action to take with regard to Calwell's second outburst, Teppema cabled his colleagues in Batavia for advice. They believed his actions had been sufficient to be considered an "official protest" and suggested that he should have another interview with Evatt. Its purpose would be to clear up the misunderstanding over what constituted an official protest and to lodge one in the light of Calwell's continued outbursts.18

In the meantime, Hasselman was sent to meet "Jim" (later Sir Laurence) MacIntyre, head of External Affairs' Pacific division. Teppema hoped Hasselman could discover departmental reaction to the incident and Evatt's current position. In his discussions, Hasselman complained to MacIntyre that the issue was being brushed under the carpet, both privately and publicly. MacIntyre replied that the department had not forgotten Calwell's outburst, but that officials were under instructions to make no statements about the O'Keefe case or Calwell's speech. He also claimed that the speech was not simply a furphy to draw attention away from the deportation. Because the Immigration Department firmly believed in Dutch complicity in the affair, any pronouncement denying the claim could only create a clash between the two departments and therefore would serve no purpose. Hasselman
insisted the Dutch had not been involved and that they could not let the insulting remarks go without some pronouncement. He asserted that the least Evatt could do was to explain the government’s point of view on an issue that was causing it international embarrassment.

Evatt had left Canberra on Friday evening to spend the weekend in Sydney. On Saturday evening, Teppema received a message from the Dutch Minister for Foreign Affairs that he would readily understand if Teppema took further steps to combat Evatt’s reluctance to act. His main wish was for the issue to be resolved quickly so that discussions could return to concerns in Indonesia. To this end, the Minister said he would issue the O’Keefes with Dutch passports regardless of whether they were entitled to them, but, not wanting Calwell to escape from the incident unchastised, he requested that any official pronouncements in the Indies or Australia should point out that the family were victims of discriminatory measures which were forcibly dividing them.19 Teppema decided it would be imprudent to give effect to the last request.

Over the weekend, after further discussions with MacIntyre, other public servants and some unnamed politicians on both sides of the House, Hasselman told Teppema that the unfolding events were part of a power struggle between Evatt and Calwell. It was widely rumoured in Canberra that Prime Minister Chifley had a serious health problem, and that he was planning to hold the 1949 general election in April or May rather than later in the year. It was believed Chifley, on the re-election of the Labor Party, would then retire and that either Evatt or Calwell would succeed him. It was certainly common knowledge in Canberra that there was no love lost between the two men. The prevalent opinion being expressed in many Canberra corridors was that Calwell had made his outburst in part to discredit Evatt’s efforts in external affairs, and to compromise his strong support for human rights at the United Nations by forcing him to show his support for the racialist White Australia policy. It was believed, however, that Calwell had bungled the attempt, bringing more criticism onto himself than Evatt. Evatt, however, could not risk a public castigation of Calwell which, because of the long standing support for the Immigration Minister in caucus, could jeopardise his own leadership aspirations. He had to rely on the caucus members themselves to deduce that Calwell could not be trusted with the party leadership as he was “hotheaded and ill-balanced”.20
Further to Evatt’s disinclination to comment publicly, Chifley did not want a publicly fought feud between the two men to divide Caucus when there was the possibility of an election in two months. MacIntyre had conceded to Hasselman that the Dutch legation had responded thoughtfully throughout and had obviously not tried to discredit the Australian government. Evatt’s eye, however, was firmly fixed on domestic political issues and he would certainly make no public comment. After further consultation with his staff, and officials in Batavia and The Hague, Teppema decided he would have to take further action. The Dutch government could not be used as a pawn in the Australian government’s internal squabbles. Teppema planned to meet Evatt again to tell him that their earlier conversation had included an official protest which would force Evatt to react — especially after Calwell’s second outburst.

On the morning of Monday 14 February, Teppema rang Evatt’s office for an appointment. The quick attention he had been granted on the 10th, however, was no longer forthcoming. Teppema’s calls on that day and the following day were continually met with the reply that Evatt was either in a parliamentary discussion or at the Attorney General’s Department working on his Banking Act appeal to the Privy Council. Exasperated, Teppema went to Parliament House on the evening of 15 February in an attempt to force his way into an appointment with Evatt. He met Evatt in a corridor on his way to a foreign policy discussion. Evatt did not stop, simply telling Teppema he would see him “Friday”. That was the day of Teppema’s daughter’s wedding and he realised Evatt was alluding to seeing him at the wedding reception.

Teppema did not consider the wedding reception an appropriate place for such an important discussion; more importantly, it gave Evatt another week in which he did not have to respond to Calwell’s outburst. Teppema was also sure that Evatt realised there would be little chance for discussion, and that the following week he would be out of Canberra, returning only briefly before his departure to London for the Privy Council appeal. With no recourse left open to him, Teppema drafted a letter to Evatt reflecting his personal frustration at Evatt’s handling of events. It reiterated the points made during their meeting, advising that the Dutch government supported those points and that this letter could therefore be regarded by Evatt as an official protest.
Anxious to rescue their relationship from the wreckage of the affair, Teppema concluded that he had been:

entirely discreet and correct all through. I have avoided saying anything which would inflame the public mind or embarrass the Australian Government. I realise that anything I say will be publicised with consequences which may well be imagined. This would be entirely the responsibility of the Australian Government. I reiterate that I am primarily concerned with the effect which publicity and ensuing discussions in the House may well have on our relations. If we are to salvage something of the old relation and allied association I feel that Cabinet Ministers should cooperate in not forcing me into a position where I would have to make a public statement. Attacks as made by Mr. Calwell are putting a severe strain on the patience and forbearance which have been constantly in evidence as far as I am concerned.24

Teppema's forbearance was tested even further when he received Evatt's reply which, in Teppema's view, reduced Australian-Dutch relations to an all time low. Evatt protested

against your letter, against its argumentative and tendentious character and especially against the impression it gives of the substance of the interview you had with me on the 10th instant.

He claimed that the Dutch reaction had confirmed that its diplomats were “assisting a party political campaign against the Government of this country” and that

there seems to be a continuous employment of propaganda and press agencies to interfere with the Government of Australia in the performance of its supreme executive functions. I think this should immediately cease.

Refusing to acknowledge that Teppema's letter constituted a formal protest, Evatt concluded with a disclaimer about his own letter being simply

a personal answer to a personal communication from yourself. I take it that it will be treated as such, without prejudice to any formal communication that you may direct to me as Minister of the Netherlands in your official capacity.25

Teppema was more bewildered than outraged by Evatt's reply. It was as if Evatt had completely dismissed anything he had said at the 10 February meeting for no other reason than because he had not considered the protest official. His delaying tactics continued, with his failure to recognise Teppema's protest in his letter because it was not contained in a memorandum and that the letter had been of a personal
nature. As for the resumption of the attack on Dutch officials in Australia, Evatt was again using the approach which on the 10th he had been apologising for. The letter does appear to have been particularly vindictive and to some extent based on a childish attempt to get even for being caught out with regard to the protest.

Teppema immediately began to draft a reply expressing regret that the situation had deteriorated so far, claiming he would investigate any substantive allegations against Dutch officers, that whether a protest was official or unofficial was beside the point, that the matter could not be left after Calwell’s second outburst, and that he felt “genuine regret” that the friendly relations which had existed personally were now jeopardised.

As Teppema drafted this letter, his disbelief at how quickly the situation had deteriorated grew. He found it impossible to understand Evatt’s behaviour — one moment deeply regretting Calwell’s comments and the next appropriating them for his own attack. He was treating the Dutch Minister as a wayward underling rather than as the representative of a foreign government. Hasselman suggested, as an explanation of the erratic responses, that the letter may not have been written by Evatt at all. To Teppema this appeared the only rational explanation of Evatt’s sudden outburst. He grew increasingly convinced that the letter had been written by a public servant in External Affairs, probably the Secretary, Dr John Burton, who was noted for his anti-Dutch views. However, the letter belies this view because it was marked personal and made specific references to the private conversation of the 10th.

Nevertheless, Teppema informed The Hague that the letter was not written by Evatt but by Burton, implying that its consequences, therefore, were not as far reaching. As a result of this belief he decided to wait until the wedding on the following day, to gauge Evatt’s mood before sending his highly critical and potentially damaging response. The rest of the day and into Friday the legation waited for a press release or a comment in the House by Evatt on either his letter or the issue in general. Again no statement was forthcoming. Teppema resigned himself to the fact that his daughter’s wedding would be marred by an inevitable political confrontation.

Later that evening a jovial and pleasant Evatt led the gathered throng at Tanya Teppema’s wedding to a “British Officer” in proposing a toast.
to the health of Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands. After the formal proceedings, as the guests moved to the dance floor, Teppema, who had avoided Evatt the entire evening, took the Australian Minister aside for the inevitable confrontation. To Teppema’s surprise, however, no confrontation occurred. Evatt remained as jovial and pleasant as he had been during the toast. The Dutch Minister began to express the opinions he had expanded on in his unfinished draft letter, concluding that Calwell’s statements could not be tolerated. Instead of a counter, Evatt simply nodded in agreement, asserting that Calwell is an awful bastard. If Curtin had been Prime Minister, he would have put him out of the Cabinet but Chifley is too lenient with him.

Teppema, obviously caught off guard, responded that he understood the internal situation in Cabinet but that had little to do with the tone and contents of Evatt’s letter of the 16th. Evatt answered: “As far as that correspondence is concerned, let us forget all about it.”

On the Monday morning following the reception, Teppema resigned himself to the fact that no public statement, not even a formal private apology, would be forthcoming from the Minister for External Affairs. Accordingly, the bemused Dutch diplomat informed Evatt that he had “come to the conclusion that no useful purpose would be served if I were to react in writing on all the matters contained” in Evatt’s missive of 16 February. He concluded with the hope, following their talk at the reception, “that our personal relations have in no way been jeopardised by the occurrences in the house last week.”

Evatt had left Canberra on the weekend and was only scheduled to return to Canberra briefly before embarking on his momentous defence of the Banking Act in the Privy Council. If nothing else, Teppema could afford a moment or two of reflection. The O’Keefe case was still front page news and Calwell had received severe criticism both nationally and internationally for his handling of the affair. In the meantime the O’Keefes had gained legal advice and were preparing for a successful fight against Calwell in the High Court.

The Federal Opposition, from the moment of Calwell’s speech, had realised it was simply an anti-Dutch outburst. Opposition leader Menzies had responded that the speech in essence only said “I hate the Dutch, I hate the Dutch, I hate the Dutch.” Like the press, however, the Opposition had soon realised more political mileage could be achieved by attacking Calwell’s inhumanity to the O’Keefes than by
defending the Dutch position. Evatt’s failure to respond to Calwell publicly was probably a factor in this shift of emphasis.

Evatt returned to Canberra on 22 February for a brief visit before heading for London. Teppema, in the company of the British High Commissioner, met Evatt and Burton that evening. At the meeting, Teppema beseeched Evatt to play a more important role in incidents such as the O’Keefe case and not leave Burton in control of policy initiative. It was wrong, he claimed, that the Minister had been uncontactable during a crisis like that of the preceding week. In conclusion, Teppema hoped for a return to a conciliatory spirit in Australian/Dutch relations.

Evatt responded that for him the O’Keefe saga was “dead and buried”. He then made two pronouncements which amazed Teppema. He apologised for the Opposition and the press making so much of Teppema’s visit of the 10th. Then he claimed he had been reluctant to speak to the House of Representatives or the press about that meeting because in his mind the meeting had been confidential. Though tempted to respond, Teppema held his tongue, simply pointing out that the Australian government would have saved itself much criticism if Evatt had even just said that the two men had discussed Calwell’s outburst. Evatt became withdrawn and did not respond, whereupon Burton apologised for his own unavailability during the preceding week. With the conclusion of the meeting, the O’Keefe affair was over, but the events of the preceding weeks shaped Dutch policy towards Australia. To Teppema, the incident was indicative of the state of Australian foreign policy in 1949.

On Teppema’s arrival in 1947, he had quickly learnt that only one member of the Australian government had any interest in foreign policy. At an early meeting with Prime Minister Chifley, Teppema was told that foreign policy was “a matter for the Doc”. At that time, Evatt’s grasp appeared firm and, with Burton at his side, the pair made a formidable combination. However, the O’Keefe case, and Evatt’s actions therein, provided conclusive proof to Teppema that the Department of External Affairs and, in consequence, Australian foreign policy had lost their way. Teppema reported to The Hague that a “coordinated” foreign policy simply did not exist. In general, this was shown by the diversity of comments on foreign policy as between Evatt, Chifley and Burton, as well as by the influence of the unions, which,
Teppema informed The Hague, controlled the left wing of Caucus and had strong representation in Cabinet through Ministers Calwell, Ward and Ashley.37

Australian foreign policy was seen by Teppema to be dominated by domestic issues, and even in-fighting in the government — the O’Keefe case being the ultimate example. It now appeared that any minister of the Australian government could venture into foreign affairs and unnecessarily complicate relations between Australia and another nation, confident that no retribution would fall upon them. The policy was also seen not to have kept pace with the times, especially the onslaught of the Cold War. Evatt’s continued insistence that Australian foreign policy was guided by the UN Charter was seen by Teppema to have stagnated Australian policy rather than being its guiding light. As a result, Australia could not respond to the many and varied pressures of the Cold War.38

Teppema put much of the blame for the situation on Evatt’s long and many absences from Australia in fulfilling his UN duties in the General Assembly. Evatt had sacrificed a definite Australian foreign policy to ensure his own personal glory in the UN. Evatt’s claims that he was the defender of the UN also did not sit well with Teppema. Evatt’s attempts to make personal contact with the whole world was naive and superficial. Teppema informed The Hague that the American ambassador saw Evatt as retarding rather than defending the UN.39

Evatt’s absences on the international stage had led to a lack of interest in Australian foreign affairs, leaving its control and direction to the public servants, headed by Burton. This was of special significance to the Dutch because of Burton’s strong anti-Dutch views. They dismissed the Australian protest at the second Dutch “Police Action” because they believed it had simply been drafted by the public servants without any comment from the politicians.40 In Teppema’s opinion, the only hope for better Dutch-Australian relations lay with the successful resolution of the Indonesian question, or Burton’s entry to Parliament and Evatt’s return to the helm of External Affairs.41

One of Teppema’s greatest fears for Australian-Dutch relations was talk of Chifley’s retirement due to ill health. Teppema was certain the ALP would be re-elected in the 1949 poll, but was fearful that the “level headed” Chifley might be replaced by a more “extreme” individual. While he found discussion of a successor marred by the intrigues of
Caucus, he was certain of one thing. Dr H.V. Evatt would never be
Prime Minister of Australia. Notwithstanding his strong image as
defender of the United Nations, Teppema believed Evatt was not
popular enough in Caucus and any chance would have been damaged
by his long absences. He was also seen by Teppema to lack any public
charisma and to have an air of coldness. He also believed, however,
that Calwell had dashed his chances because of the O’Keefe affair and
hoped the moderate Senator Mackenna would replace Chifley.42

It is worth noting that many of Teppema’s views were the product
of Canberra’s diplomatic circle, being shared or formulated by indi­
viduals such as the British High Commissioner and the American
Ambassador. At one social function, visiting former British Foreign
Secretary Anthony Eden felt compelled to take Teppema aside and
apologise for the behaviour of the Australian Government during the
O’Keefe affair — presumably from a Commonwealth perspective.

Some may see Evatt’s actions during the O’Keefe affair as further
proof of the dichotomy of Evatt’s personality traits.43 Others may claim
it is a good example of Evatt’s supposedly suspicious mind which
brimmed with conspiracy theories.44 Some others may claim it was an
example of Evatt’s ineptness as a domestic politician.45 Alternatively,
the incident may have been an aberration. Whatever conclusion is
drawn from the events, it is clear that Evatt’s biographers and Petrus
Ephrem Teppema would probably all agree with Alan Renouf, that
Evatt was guilty of occasional lapses of manners. His behaviour in the
O’Keefe case was one such lapse.
During his long tenure as Minister for External Affairs, Dr H.V. Evatt was confronted with the dilemma of reassessing Australia's national interests. The Labor government held office at a time when the decline of Australia's assumed traditional protector — Britain — was obvious, but a future under the US umbrella was not. The period from 1941–49 was one of enormous change — world war; Cold War; Asian revolution; and the end of United States isolationism. It was also one in which the nature of the Anglo-American Alliance was unclear, even though from the Australian perspective, from "Hitler First" to NATO, both powers were obviously committed to Europe. It is interesting against such a background that many have found Evatt's foreign policy to be inconsistent and erratic, or that he tried to rise above the chaos by espousing the need for international law. It is perhaps more appropriate to see Evatt as the foreign minister of a small power constantly assessing Australian options in a multipolar world.

Yet Evatt did not simply champion the cause of the small powers against the great. While his frustration with the "Hitler First" strategy, the veto and the threat of an "imposed" Big Power Peace are well enough known, he recognised that he could not intervene in the higher direction of the war and had to leave it to Churchill to speak for Australia. He also recognised that Australian economic interests were better secured by supporting the British position in Anglo-American talks on post-war trade. Similarly the American refusal to talk to Australia — either in trade talks or about the post-war settlement in the Pacific, except as a member of the British Commonwealth — led to a reaffirmation of the Imperial bond as the primary one for Australia. Any turning to the United States was to be in the future and certainly postdated the Chifley government. Evatt recognised the value of the
Imperial connection as an adjunct of Australian policy, but he was also aware of its limitations.

The problem was that no purely Empire solution could be found to the question of Australian security. Quite apart from Britain’s commitment to Europe and the Middle East, which dictated different strategic priorities to those of Australia, Canadian and South African opposition made it impossible to “reintegrate” the Commonwealth so that it might claim to be the equal of the other “Big Two”. This argument had been put to Eden and Attlee after 1942, when they drew attention to the fact that unless Britain could maintain its Empire and develop close cooperation with the Dominions then it would have difficulty maintaining its position as a world power. Despite the likely difficulties with the Canadians and South Africans, however, there were a number of prominent members of the British government who argued publicly that the post-war Commonwealth would have to be based on integrated defence and — most importantly — economic policies.¹

Evatt became aware of this thinking during his second wartime mission to Britain in 1943 and readily concurred that “the Empire must not be afraid of offending other nations by taking an interest in itself”. The underlying problem, however, despite the many attempts by Evatt before 1949 to adopt a Commonwealth position in opposition to the other “Great Powers”, was that British power was underwritten by US dollars. Evatt knew the economic difficulties of the British well enough, but he was determined to support the Sterling Bloc for as long as possible. Whereas America wanted to use the Mutual Aid Agreement to reduce post-war trade restrictions, and especially Imperial Preference, the British promised Evatt during his visit to London in 1942 that they would not allow Australian reserves to fall below 40 million pounds sterling. If necessary, promised Kingsley Wood, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Australia would be advanced interest-free loans to redeem this promise. This was in stark contrast to Australian experiences with the Americans. They sought not only to broaden Australian contributions under reciprocal aid, but also to narrowly define their own assistance provided under Lend-Lease — a problem that persisted until the Truman Administration.²

Behind the debate over reciprocal aid were the Anglo-American talks on post-war trade. The British, led by Keynes, recognised that debtor nations after the war would need access to large international
liquid reserves and that, in the event that they ran a negative trade current account, they would also need the freedom to adjust the value of their currencies. One of the reasons that countries might suffer the latter problem was the need for welfare spending, something to which both the British Labour and Australian Labor Parties were committed. Yet it became obvious in 1943 that the Americans were not envisaging a large international fund. The "Stabilization Fund" suggested by the United States would have overdraft facilities of six billion dollars with an American liability of about two billion dollars. In contrast, the British had suggested twenty-six billion and twenty billion respectively! And yet the Americans wanted a far more powerful fund when it came to restricting the freedom to adjust national currencies.3

Evatt's response was to support strongly the British position, especially in relation to the need to pursue social objectives. For this reason, in stark contrast to many of his views on the role of international government, Evatt insisted on the right of Australia to withdraw from the fund and to have the power to adjust its currency where necessary. Accordingly he argued that, in accompanying negotiations on trade, there should also be consideration of "Full Employment", a proposition which would permit the continued use of trade restriction while Australia pursued its objectives of building a more diversified economy. And it also allowed him, in the event that such an international agreement could be reached, to return to his old use of the external affairs power to extend federal power over the economy.4

Throughout the rest of his time in office, Evatt supported the Ottawa System in preference to the American proposals — which were seen as based on "competitive nationalism and monopoly capitalism". In the Australia–New Zealand Agreement of January 1944, for example, he incorporated a strong section which had the effect of excluding American civil aviation from Australia's security zone and foreshadowed that in future Australia would have to look, in the likely event that an international agreement could not be reached, to "a system of air trunk routes controlled and operated by Governments of the British Commonwealth under Government ownership". The ANZAC Agreement also foreshadowed similar provisions for shipping and telecommunications — all of which divided Australian and American negotiators until 1949. Specifically, the Australians clung to the Imperial Preference system until, at the Torquay Conference in 1951, the
Foreign Minister for a Small Power

Americans demanded its dissolution and an end to the Reciprocal Trade Agreement between Australia and Britain. Australia also resisted American attempts to weaken the Ottawa system by supporting sterling and by protecting British investments in Australia from the “Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation” — pressed by the United States after 1946 to ensure their economic penetration of Australia. On the question of the sterling bloc, Evatt had a happy coincidence of views with the British. But this was not enough to ensure that other Australian interests could also be guaranteed by cooperation within the Commonwealth. The real problem was that from the Washington Conference in 1922 to the Suez fiasco in 1956 Britain gambled on the English-speaking alliance. The Four Power Declaration in 1943 made it clear to Evatt that Britain was a member of a very different club, and it was one that cut across traditional lines of Imperial consultation. Significantly, as at Locarno, “Britain”, and not the “Commonwealth”, became the signatory of the Four Power Agreement, occasioning a strong protest from Evatt. He argued that the “Commonwealth” and not “Britain” should be named and treated as one of the great powers and that Australia should be included in the Declaration “either as part of the Commonwealth or alone”. Publicly Evatt called for closer Imperial consultation and in the House of Representatives he foreshadowed Curtin’s later, and undeservedly more famous “Fourth Empire” appeal, with his plea that membership of the Commonwealth was “fundamental” to Australian foreign policy. Churchill, however, dismissed Evatt’s arguments by declaring that he was not prepared to see the “strangling” of Britain’s foreign policy by “the endless process of consulting all four Dominions” and promised only that they would be brought into consultation “as they were last time at the Peace Conference”.

Even where the “Commonwealth” was to be represented on bodies such as the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), Evatt was reminded that Canada, and not Australia, was the senior Dominion, one factor that may explain his violent reaction to the Quebec Conference. It almost certainly explains his adoption of Canada’s concept of “Middle Power” before the San Francisco Conference of 1945 and his advocacy of the need to decentralise UNRRA at the Lapston Conference. And it was also obvious to Evatt that the Canadians did not see the idea of an agreed Commonwealth position,
as Mackenzie King argued in 1944, as “feasible or really desirable”. Canadian opposition, indeed, wrecked any chance of coordinating Empire defence, which Evatt had wanted in 1943, and they championed American plans to deregulate telecommunications and civil aviation, rejecting any sense of Empire control. Not surprisingly, a number of observers have commented on Evatt’s very poor relations with the Canadians at the end of the war.7

Consequently Evatt was forced to seek to adopt extra-Imperial, or rather supplementary, positions to argue Australia’s case after 1943. He embraced Canada’s concept of “Middle Power” status; he argued that the UN adopt a “functional criteria” in allocating positions — despite his concerns over the notion of “the Big Powers”; he argued the need to give primacy to “belligerent status” in an attempt to give Australia primacy over others, such as members of the South American bloc; and he argued the role of Australia as a leading Pacific nation.8

These were all claims that Australia was something more than a small power, but in reality it was as the advocate of a small power that much of Evatt’s behaviour becomes explicable. Behind all his claims there was one point of consistency — what irked Evatt was not so much that Australia was not directly consulted, but the fact that the actual decisions taken were seen to conflict with vital national interests. In the Pacific Region he was determined to do whatever was necessary to promote those interests. In a way he followed a policy that had been argued in the Institute of International Affairs in the dark days following the 1937 Imperial Conference — that Australia alone would have to adopt a much more sophisticated foreign policy, one that would have to effect a “synthesis” at all levels — national, imperial and international. Evatt pursued Australian national interests passionately — for some, too passionately — with such a “synthesis” in mind, and in so doing he was always pragmatic. He did not let high principle or legality stand in his way. He was both Attorney General and Minister for External Affairs.9

In the two months preceding the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, we can see an early example of his ability to string together an array of apparently inconsistent initiatives designed to present his position. At that time, Evatt found Britain unable to intervene in strength in the Far East while United States policy was unclear, beyond an attempt by Hull to secure a modus vivendi — a partial agreement that would see
the relaxation of the US embargo on Japan in return for a withdrawal of Japanese troops from Indochina.\(^{10}\)

It is true that Evatt called for an international conference — which some have seen as naive or legalistic — to cover the Pacific. But behind the scenes he seized upon the Hull proposals as a temporary basis for Pacific peace, although this clearly meant the continuation of the war in China. Indeed Evatt, like all other members of the Advisory War Council, had been alarmed by the imposition of sanctions by the United States when the Japanese had occupied Indochina. And in accepting the Hull position he did so in sharp contrast to Britain which was not simply leaving the initiative with the United States but was now much more belligerent regarding the Japanese following the Atlantic meeting where Churchill succeeded in securing American support for British strategic objectives in Europe. To Churchill, who had acceded to Japanese demands after the fall of France the previous year and closed the Burma Road, the \textit{modus vivendi} could only be obtained at the expense of China, and that now was too high a price to pay. Now there was a very real chance of at last getting the United States into the war — into the European war.\(^{11}\)

In other words, Evatt had to attempt to intervene in the Hull–Kurusu talks to counter the British. And in so doing he was acting on the advice of others. Bruce cabled that the British were not facing the “issues” in the Far East and that “the time had come for dropping the 'leave it to your partner attitude' ... (we should have) the frankest discussions with the Americans as to where the Anglo-Japanese discussions are (going).” Page also advised that the time had come for “talking frankly” while Casey warned that the \textit{modus vivendi} proposals were the last chance for peace. Evatt also knew from Latham that the British government had “brushed aside” Craigie’s recommendation that they attempt to rescue the talks and participate directly in them. On 27 November 1941, the deadline for accepting the \textit{modus vivendi} proposals, Evatt learned that Hull was not prepared to proceed with his proposals in the face of British opposition, occasioning Evatt’s first parliamentary address as Minister for External Affairs that day in which he argued that the Hull proposal should be accepted and that the time had come for Australia to “intervene directly in international matters”. He then put his case for an international conference in the Pacific in which he specifically refused to list China as one of the countries that
should be guaranteed against aggression. At the same time he cabled Casey, Eggleston and Bruce that the Chinese must not be allowed to precipitate a general Pacific war in order to divert pressure from themselves. He was indeed “talking frankly” as he had been advised.12

Evatt also “talked frankly” about getting the Soviet Union to agree to fighting in the Far East in the event of Japanese aggression. Here again he clashed with the British who were of course determined to confine Soviet energies to Europe. And again we see a combination of approaches. Evatt’s behaviour towards the Soviet Union during his first six months in office was based on Australian security, not on ideology. Firstly he was prepared to meet Stalin’s wishes and declare war on Germany’s allies — Finland, Hungary and Roumania. This was not because it was a good opportunity to demonstrate his interest in “constitutional questions” and following South African or Canadian precedents, as Hasluck and others have asserted, but because he supported the view forwarded by Eggleston that there should be a common “anti-Axis” bloc which would commit the Soviets to war against Japan. He also chose his time — he announced Australia’s declaration of war and the despatch of a diplomatic mission to the Soviet Union at the height of talks between the British and Soviets. Evatt wanted a reciprocal agreement embracing the Far East as well as Europe.13 And he would do anything to get it.

After Pearl Harbor, Evatt went even further in an attempt to enlist Soviet help. He had received advice from Casey that Russian Foreign Minister Litvinov had alluded to the possibility of a Soviet declaration of war on Japan in return for “adequate consideration”. This time it was Casey who advised that Australia “talk frankly” and by that he meant territorial concessions that the Allies might make — in much the same way that Stafford Cripps had been advocating in Europe. On 16 December 1941, the day that Eden met Stalin in Moscow to consider the Soviet proposals for the post-war territorial settlement in Europe, Evatt publicised his much-criticised list of suggested territorial concessions, which of course were designed especially to encourage the Soviet Union as a “Pacific Power”. At this juncture Evatt dismissed attempts to argue his offer around the Atlantic Charter as “suicidal”.14

In so doing, Evatt was following a position that had been spelt out clearly to Australians at the 1937 Imperial Conference and many times since — Japan could not hope to prosecute a major drive into the Pacific
in the event of hostilities with the Soviet Union. As such, there had been Australians — including Menzies — since 1937 toying with the need to adopt a “realistic policy” towards the Soviet Union. Evatt gave expression to that policy.¹⁵

Possibly nothing demonstrates Evatt's ability to cobble together a vast array of policies as his attempt to lay an Australian claim to Timor. Here, as in the Hull–Kurusu talks and his attempts to enlist Soviet support in the Pacific, he clashed with the strategic priorities of the British. To the British, the Portuguese were an important ally which could counter Axis penetration of the Iberian peninsula and provide vital bases in the Atlantic in the event that Gibraltar was lost. To Evatt, Timor was the one area, as he said in November 1941, “where Australia would declare war on Japan irrespective of the attitude of the United States”.¹⁶

In 1943 Evatt bluntly informed the British War Cabinet that, after the war, Australia “should have Timor”. This declaration did not stop the British proceeding with their guarantee to restore the Portuguese Empire. Evatt, however, was not content to leave it at that. He responded by declaring his famous zone of security, the basis of his Anzac Pact. He made it clear that he had no intention of claiming French or British territory, and he had to accept that the Dutch would return by virtue of the size of their holdings in Asia — here Evatt spoke vaguely about a “share” in “policing” their region. But Australia could not tolerate the restoration of so weak a power as Portugal — a position he hoped to have the British concede until the eve of the San Francisco Conference. Once again, however, his “talking frankly” behind the scenes yielded little.¹⁷

Evatt’s major weapon by which he hoped to secure Timor was his advocacy of trusteeship. Pointedly, the British saw this as his “telescope pointed the wrong way and focused on Timor”. Again it is difficult to sustain the view of a number of commentators that Evatt distrusted European imperialism or that he put the colonial question “in a special compartment of idealism” unrelated to questions of “security, strategic interests, or economic or power alignments and rivalries”. From the very first time that he heard of Hull’s proposal that a declaration be made on colonies Evatt made it quite apparent that in the Pacific “the first principle which must be applied is that of security”. Leading up to the San Francisco Conference he publicised at
every opportunity the role of the Australian Commandos in Timor and pointed to the very fine welfare record of the Australian administration in New Guinea — in contrast to the maladministration of the Portuguese in Timor. Not surprisingly, at San Francisco, Evatt proceeded with, in the view of an Indian observer, his “case for the landlords” in the Trusteeship Council. While he sought to exclude the Americans from Australia’s strategic zone, he demanded that Australia as a security power be specifically associated with those territories where “former rulers were overcome”. Herein he sought to argue for a “regional body for enforcement action” which, in the context of Timor, was not a surprising departure from his insistence elsewhere that international sovereignty should be carefully circumscribed in relation to “domestic jurisdiction” and the compulsory jurisdiction of the proposed International Monetary Fund.18

In August, with the abrupt cessation of hostilities, Evatt attempted to get the Portuguese to grant Australia a hundred-year lease over the island and asked the British to block the return of Portuguese forces. He also advised that the Australians would only hand over the administration of the island pending a “long term arrangement” over the island’s security. When it was clear that the British, conscious of their own colonies as well as their commitments to Portugal, would not support him Evatt finally fell back on the argument that Australian forces would have to remain on the island to investigate war crimes in which Portugal, as a non-belligerent, could claim “no jurisdiction”. In the upshot, all he got was a joint investigation and a very general declaration from the Portuguese that it would “seek” a “closer relationship” covering defence, trade and communications. The whole episode revealed that Evatt was in fact pursuing a contradictory policy. He wanted to preserve British influence in the region but also wanted to interfere in the affairs of the neighbouring colonies of other powers.19

Behind Evatt’s concern over Timor and the “zone of security” was his preoccupation with China. That preoccupation is possibly one of the most underrated influences on Evatt’s policies. In 1942 he received a number of disturbing indications that the United States was preparing to sponsor China as one of the “Principal Powers” that must have a major say in the security arrangements for the post-war world. In 1943 China made its formal debut as one of the “Four Great Powers” with
its association with the Moscow, Quebec and Cairo Conferences — the latter particularly offended Evatt because China was promised the restoration of territories seized by Japan. He knew that Roosevelt was contemplating the displacement of the French by handing Indochina to China while New Caledonia would go to the United States. He also knew that Hull was proposing to associate China as a "Principal Power" in the question of post-war colonies in the Pacific. In 1945 his worst fears were realised when it was announced at Potsdam that China would be included in the Council of Foreign Ministers that would oversee the post-war settlement.  

Evatt’s policies throughout the war, and arguably until the recognition question in 1949, were very largely a reaction to the possibility that China might replace Japan as the next regional threat. Again we see an array of initiatives and his very obvious pragmatism. He did not pretend that his policy towards China in 1941 was based on high principle, and that was to continue. When the impotent Pacific War Council was established in Washington, Evatt was keen to exclude China as a potential competitor for scarce resources. In 1943, during his attempts to secure planes for the RAAF’s 73 squadron program in the United States, he saw China as a competitor for the aircraft. In 1942 he championed the return of the British to their Empire, in the face of Chinese and American criticism, and countered the proposal by Chiang Kai-shek that China and America press to secure Indian independence by advocating Dominion status for that country. But his most virulent attacks came after 1943 when he dismissed the notion that China was one of the world’s great powers and argued that the Four Power Declaration lost much of its “positive value” because of the inclusion of China. But following the apparent territorial concessions to China at Cairo, and given, as we have seen, the failure to secure Britain’s commitment to Australia’s “security zone”, he proposed the ANZAC Pact largely, as he confided to the British High Commissioner in Canberra, because of the “concessions made to China at Cairo”.  

At the Canberra conference of 1944, Evatt proposed a regional meeting to discuss Pacific affairs, but this excluded China, occasioning the protest of their Canberra legation. Evatt also countered the proposed transfer of French colonies by according the French Committee of National Liberation full diplomatic status — well before the British were able to do it due to the feelings of the United States. Thereafter
Evatt courted the French, hoping to get them to concede Australian “security power” claims in return for recognition of their rights to reclaim their colonies. Evatt also proposed a “South Seas Regional Commission” in an attempt to bar the infiltration of Chinese into the security zone and made it clear that such a Commission would be concerned with “the welfare of the native peoples of Melanesian and Polynesian race”. Not surprisingly Evatt announced at the Canberra conference the right of Australia to control migration as a “domestic matter” and persisted with this to San Francisco, where he clashed head on with the Chinese delegation.

During 1945 Evatt was unremitting in his attempts to counter what he saw as the beginning of an “imposed peace” which would include China and relegate Australian interests to be represented by a Britain not inclined to challenge American leadership in the Far East. Pointedly Evatt did not respond to the momentous decisions at the Yalta Conference, but the announcement at Potsdam that China would be actively associated as a “Principal” in the Pacific caused him most acute alarm. But he had few options. He had unsuccessfully tried to resist cuts to manpower so that the size of Australia’s forces could support his claim that Australia should be accorded the status of a “Principal Power” in the Pacific. Evatt argued that Australia was a “belligerent”, unlike China in Europe, and ultimately that Australia had suffered grievous war crimes at the hands of the Japanese.

Indeed this latter argument provided Evatt with his only effective counter to the Potsdam Declaration — that Hirohito be treated as a war criminal. Evatt’s likely aims in this were to secure a “hard peace” settlement for Japan and a voice for Australia. Herein he did not send the Australian war crime findings of Sir William Webb to London and Washington until the day that Japan accepted the Potsdam Declaration with the proviso that the Emperor would remain as “sovereign ruler”. As Webb had reported to Evatt earlier in 1945, although the case against the emperor was prima facie, the case should be dealt with at the “highest political and diplomatic level”. Evatt’s determination to deal with the emperor harshly was based less on a desire to see justice done than on a means of securing Australian wishes that Japan not emerge again as an aggressor. Nor did Evatt want the question of reparations to be decided in the interests of China, which had been laying extensive
claims since 1942, especially in regard to the Japanese merchant marine. This determination in all probability also explains his ready acceptance of the Soviet Union as a member of the Far Eastern Commission and as a Pacific Power — that is, as potential counterweight to Japan and China. Arguably this was Evatt’s view of the world until at least 1949. He did not see Japan as the bastion of the Free World in Asia and often sided with the Soviet Union in attempting to restrict MacArthur’s dictatorial power over the Allied Council for Japan. Nor did he share British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin’s dream of using the British Empire to contain communism in the Middle East. He did not see, while in office, the successful outcome of Anglo-American trade talks; nor did he see the United States extend Marshall Plan-like assistance to Asia and the Pacific. Instead he saw America as a major creditor nation committed to ruthless free trade. It appears likely, that as others prepared for the Cold War, Evatt saw a multipolar world in which Australia had to look to its own policies in the Pacific. Australia certainly continued to react to events as they unfolded, but in so doing, it had to base its policies, as he told the Parliament in 1946, on “three safeguards, each wider in scope than the other ... [These were] collective security, organised on a world and regional basis, the degree of Empire cooperation which can be established, and national defence.”

Today, as Australia’s special relationship with the United States continues to wither and its future appears likely to be one of exclusion from the emerging mega-economic blocs, we would do well to recall Evatt’s attempts as External Affairs Minister of a small nation to make its interests clear in any way possible. We must make it alone in Asia. But we have been in that position once before.
1 A Man Out of His Time


2 “Merely a Facade”?

1. My thanks to David Day, then of Bond University, who organised the excellent conference on H.V. Evatt that spawned this paper; to the Australian-American Educational Foundation which provided the Fulbright award that got me to Australia; and to Peter Edwards of the Australian War Memorial and the staff of the Australian Archives in Mitchell, ACT, for their help in the archives. I should also mention that one of the most effective, quick history lessons I have ever received came from two visits to the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. The sense of pride, anger, and nationalism that exudes from the exhibits is extraordinary. Thanks also to the Rutgers University Research Council which has provided steady support for my work on FDR.
2. The label “Down Under” is itself an example of the Anglocentric view of many Australians, for the reference point was, quite obviously, London. Similarly, the Near East and the Far East. “Near” to what? “Far” from what? Again London was the answer.
3. Dr Herbert Vere “Doc” Evatt, invariably called “the Doc” in the rigidly egalitarian world of Australian politics, was a distinguished lawyer and judge who became Minister for External Affairs (later Foreign Affairs) when the Labor Government of Prime Minister John Curtin took office on 3 October 1940. That government remained in power throughout the war. Evatt reorganised the Department of External Affairs into a self-conscious agent of national foreign policy, as Australians began to reject the practice of dealing with foreign nations through the British Imperial/Commonwealth system. The development of that sense of nationalism is vigorously described in David Day’s books, Menzies & Churchill at War, North Ryde, NSW & London: Angus & Robertson, 1986, The Great Betrayal: Britain, Australia & the Onset of the Pacific War, 1939-42, North Ryde, NSW & London: Angus & Robertson, 1988, and Reluctant Nation: Australia and the Allied


8. The few pieces of correspondence to and from Evatt are found largely in the President’s Secretary’s File (PSF) for Australia; Franklin D. Roosevelt papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (FDRL), Hyde Park, New York. The Eleanor Roosevelt papers at the FDRL contain a few thank-you notes exchanged by Eleanor Roosevelt and Mary Alice Evatt, the “Doc’s” wife, but nothing of substance, despite the recollection of Evatt’s family that the two women had confided in each other.

9. Churchill’s proposal went to Australia in Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, No. 72, forwarding Churchill to Curtin, 19 January 1942, Australian Archives, Australian Capital Territory (AA/ACT), Commonwealth Record Series (CRS)
A981/Var41B; see also the subsequent messages in that file for January to March 1942. Churchill summarised the debate for Roosevelt in C-159x, 27 Jan. 1942, Kimball, Churchill & Roosevelt, I. Further details of the formation of the London and Washington Pacific War Councils are provided in Bell, Unequal Allies, pp. 50–61, which also provided much of the background material for this essay. Churchill’s thoughts are in Kimball, Churchill & Roosevelt, I, C-58, 24 March 1942.


11. Bell, Unequal Allies, p. 64, offers some examples of Roosevelt’s style during meetings of the Pacific War Council (PWC). Unless otherwise indicated, all references to the PWC are for the Washington council, not the one in London. There are no formal records of PWC meetings, but summaries were prepared for the President, usually by his naval aide, Capt. John McCrea until early 1943, then Rear Admiral Wilson Brown. Occasionally Harry Hopkins took notes in McCrea’s absence; Map Room papers (MR), FDRL, box 168, “Pacific War Council,” folders 1 and 2. I have also made use of summaries sent to Canberra by the Australian representative at PWC meetings, usually the Minister in Washington. Those are found in AA/ACT-CRS A981/Var41B and CRS A3300, item 234 (for 1942), and CRS A3300/2, items 264-65, 325 (for 1943–45). All of those records for 1944 and 1945 (files 265 and 266) are reproduced in Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937–1949 (DAFP), W. J. Hudson, et al. (eds), vols. V-VIII, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1982–90). Roosevelt’s determination to keep the PWC under his thumb is illustrated by his comments at the first meeting, held on 1 April 1942. He asked those present to work directly through his naval aide, Capt. John McCrea, and suggested (tantamount to a directive, since Roosevelt chaired the group) that there be no formal minutes. The Australian Minister in Washington, Owen Dixon, reported to Curtin that there was no record of PWC proceedings; Dixon to Curtin, No. S.132., 3 September 1942, AA/ACT-CRS A981/Var41B; and 1st PWC meeting, 1 April 1942, MR-FDRL, box 168, folder 1. Further references to PWC summaries at the FDRL will omit the box and folder number. There are only two folders, and those in folder 2 begin with the 19th meeting on 2 Sept. 1942. The summaries usually used indirect discourse for statements by participants, although occasionally direct, apparently verbatim, statements were taken down. Those direct quotations are indicated by single inverted commas within quotation marks. Timothy P. Maga has briefly summarised some of the Washington PWC meetings from an American point of view, although his citations are not reliable; “Vision and Victory: Franklin Roosevelt and the Pacific War Council, 1942–1944,” Presidential Studies Quarterly, 21, spring 1991, pp. 351–63.


15. The argument between Soong and Churchill is in the 31st PWC meeting, 20 May 1943, MR-FDRL.

16. Philippine President Manuel Quezon asked Hopkins to arrange for his membership on the PWC. When FDR agreed, Quezon wrote Hopkins an effusive letter of thanks; Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins, p. 516. Throughout the war, Quezon repeated Roosevelt’s sentiments that the United States had handled the Philippines exactly right, combining education in democracy with social reform and a firm commitment to independence. That formulation was a major part of Roosevelt’s entire approach to decolonisation. See Fred E. Pollock and Warren F. Kimball, “In Search of Monsters to Destroy: Roosevelt and Colonialism”, in Kimball, The Juggler: Franklin Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991, pp. 127-57. The most striking example of Quezon’s endorsement of American policy is in a speech before the U.S. Naval Academy Women’s Club, 3 April 1944, that was reprinted in the Congressional Record. Titled “Dewey’s Naval Victory and the American Pioneers in the Philippines”, Quezon spent most of the address praising the work of what he called the early American “pioneers” in the Philippines, like William Howard Taft, for their “patience and tact, limitless energy and enthusiasm, consideration, and sympathetic understanding... Disregarding old colonial methods, America followed in the islands a policy what was humane, altruistic, and progressive... She has administered the affairs of the islands as a true trustee [Roosevelt’s favorite word in such matters] ...” MR-FDRL, box 168, “Pacific War Council”.


History, pp. 181-89, claims Evatt feigned surprise about the Europe 1st strategy. J. Robertson, "Australia and the 'Beat Hitler First' Strategy, 1941-42" Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 11 (1983), pp. 300-21, argues that Evatt was kept in the dark by Australian representatives in Washington and London. Day, in "H. V. Evatt and the 'Beat Hitler First' Strategy?" Historical Studies, pp. 587-603, asserts that Evatt thought he could "bend" that strategy. And those are only the most recent treatments of this controversy. Perhaps, as Day argues, Evatt was kept in the dark by Anglophilic Australian representatives in London and Washington and by the games of domestic politicians in Canberra. But, at the second meeting of the Washington PWC, held on 7 April 1942, Roosevelt established the agenda, as he always did, by leading off with some announcements — this time about the unilateral American decisions about the command structure in the Southwest Pacific. Those decisions were, fundamentally, part of the internal struggle between the US Army and Navy for pride of place in the Pacific War, and, to New Zealand's distress, gave security of those islands to the Navy. Australia, within the "supreme" command of General Douglas MacArthur, only recently arrived after the collapse of U.S./Philippine resistance in the Philippines, was an Army responsibility, and naval support was to be "without restrictions imposed by the local situation". In other words, there was no all-or-nothing commitment by the United States Navy to repel a Japanese invasion of Australia. That should have rung a gentle bell in Evatt's mind about the relative importance of Australia in at least American thinking. Actually, he had already indicated his awareness of the secondary nature of the Southwest Pacific in a memorandum he sent to Roosevelt on 5 April. Evatt's purpose, as others have explained at length, was to promote the establishment of supply allocation machinery that would ensure a steady supply of war materials for Australia. The way to do that was to create goals based on long-term strategic plans, thus preventing — or minimising — the diversion of supplies because of the "pressure of the moment", as Evatt put it. Evatt suggested that the allocation committee be based in Washington, a move that massaged his own prejudices against London, and also appealed to FDR's obvious intention that the war be directed from the United States. He proposed that each theatre be assigned a relative importance and that supplies be allocated accordingly. The commission would meet regularly to reassess things. Evatt's own assessment of the unequal importance of the Pacific Theatre was revealed by his use of 15 per cent as an example of the relative strategic importance of the Pacific (not just the Southwest Pacific) theatre;

Evatt to FDR, 5 April 1942, MR-FDRL, box 168, PWC.

21. Dixon's report of Roosevelt's response to Fraser's suggestion differs in tenor from the US minutes. In that case, the usual pattern was reversed and Dixon perceptively saw through the President's verbal smokescreen; 18th PWC meeting, 27 August 1942; Dixon to Department of External Affairs (E.A.), No. S.119., 28 August 1942, AA/ACT-CRS A981/War41B.

22. 7th PWC meeting, 13 May 1942; 15th PWC meeting, 22 July 1942, MR-FDRL.


24. The April 1942 bombing raid on Tokyo, led by Col. James Doolittle, served a similar purpose. It suggested to the public a willingness to step up the war against Japan, but in fact left intact the Europe-first strategy.

25. As MacArthur repeatedly made clear to the Australians, he thought Roosevelt "ruthless and unscrupulous". Day, Reluctant Nation, p. 126. Roosevelt returned the compliment. When Roosevelt selected George Marshall as Army Chief of Staff, he bypassed General Hugh Drum, the leading candidate who tried to use his
well-placed political allies as leverage to get the appointment; see Thomas Parrish, *Roosevelt and Marshall: Partners in Politics and War*, New York: William Morrow, 1989, p. 91. Reading Eric Larrabee, *Commander in Chief*, New York: Harper & Row, 1987 one gets the idea that the most foolish thing FDR did was to recall MacArthur. Larrabee claims FDR “tamed” MacArthur (p. 307), but if so, it was more the mesmerising of snake by charmer than the subduing of lion by trainer. See also my “‘Dr. New Deal’: Franklin Roosevelt as Commander in Chief” in J.G. Dawson III (ed.), *Commanders in Chief: Presidential Leadership in Modern Wars*, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993, pp. 87–105.


27. To document this would require listing every published study of Anglo-American strategy during World War II. For starters, see Stoler, *Second Front*.


29. See various PWC summaries, for example, the 6th PWC meeting, 5 May 1942; 15th PWC meeting, 22 July 1942. This begs the issue of why the Soviets did not fully join the Anglo-American alliance in 1944 by cooperating against Japan. By then, the Soviet position in Europe was secure and there was no possibility that the Japanese, already losing in the Pacific, would add to the Kremlin’s problems by attacking the USSR.


31. This assertion of independent Australian national interest received MacArthur’s usual complaint that his freedom of action was limited by directives from higher authority, though he agreed with Australian objectives. Once MacArthur no longer needed Australian military and political support against his own Joint Chiefs of Staff, he quickly began to seek his own ends, and Australian attempts to become an integral but independent part of the Philippines campaign came to naught. This shift is well covered by Horner, *High Command*, and the documents in John Robertson & John McCarthy, *Australian War Strategy, 1939–1945: A Documentary History*, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1985.


35. As R.G. Menzies put it to the Australian Parliament: “... we of the British race have a profound interest in the relief of Burma, Malaya, and Singapore, and we in Australia have a particular interest in the relief of the Netherlands East Indies.” He went on to ask that Australian troops be used for those purposes; Robertson & McCarthy, *Australian War Strategy*, p. 401. See also Day, *Reluctant Nation*, p. 121, for references by Evatt to Timor and the NEI.


37. Winston S. Churchill, The Hinge of Fate, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950, pp. 785–86. See also Kimball, Churchill & Roosevelt, II, pp. 202ff. At the time of the TRIDENT meeting, General Marshall put the Pacific war as his fourth priority — after the anti-submarine campaign in the Atlantic, aid to Russia, and getting Turkey to join the fight. The invasion of France was not a priority, it was an assumption; ibid., C-296, p. 217. Churchill regularly proposed a move into southern Burma as a precursor to the retaking of Singapore, but his own chiefs of staff rejected the notion.

38. Evatt’s unsuccessful 1943 mission is discussed in all the studies of Australian foreign policy in World War II. See, for example, Bell, Unequal Allies, and Edwards, “Evatt and the Americans,” Historical Studies (1979).


41. 27th PWC meeting, 3 Feb. 1943, MR-FDRL.

42. Sir Owen Dixon normally attended PWC meetings except during Evatt’s two trips to the United States.

43. Bell, Unequal Allies, p. 62-64.

44. 4th and 5th meetings of the PWC, 21 and 29 April, 1942, MR-FDRL.

45. Roosevelt suggested to Churchill that they act as post-war police during the Atlantic Conference in August 1941; Wilson, The First Summit, pp. 198–99. Roosevelt post-war plans are treated in Kimball, The Juggler, passim, but especially pp. 83–105.


47. For Roosevelt’s comments to the press, see DaCapo (ed.), Presidential Press Conferences, 31 March 1942, 19: pp. 247–49. Halifax’s proposal and Australian opposition are mentioned in Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins, pp. 516. Australian opposition to Chinese membership on the PWC is from Bell, Unequal Allies, pp. 57–58.
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49. Roosevelt's position on colonialism in India and the French Empire is examined in some detail in Kimball, The Juggler, pp. 127-57.

50. 16th PWC meeting, 29 July 1942, MR-FDRL. Kimball, Churchill & Roosevelt, I, R-172. Churchill's immediate and firm rejection is in ibid., C-125.

51. 17th PWC meeting, 12 Aug. 1942, MR-FDRL. Roosevelt repeatedly drew parallels between the Indian situation and the United States in the era of the Articles of Confederation. Those agreements had provided a temporary government whose major contribution, according to Roosevelt, was to draw up the US Constitution. He proposed a similar process for India. See Kimball, Churchill & Roosevelt, I, R-116 draft A (dtd 25 Feb. 1942), R-116, R-132. Churchill's comments are in the headnotes to those documents.

52. 20th PWC meeting, MR-FDRL.


54. 31st PWC meeting, 20 May 1943, MR-FDRL.


57. In February 1944, Roosevelt's Naval Aide sent him a memo containing an assessment by the Office of Naval Intelligence which noted the Australian press claims; "Memo from Wilson Brown for the President, 1 Feb. 1944, MR-FDRL, box 163, "Naval Aide's Files," A-8.


60. DAFP, 1945, 8: doc. 7, Evatt to Eggleston, 15 Jan. 1945; doc. 8, Evatt to Fraser, 15 Jan. 1945; doc. 27, T.G. D'Alton to Evatt, 8 Feb. 1945.

61. Roosevelt seemed wary of being lured into discussions. Dixon reported that he could not arrange private meetings with the President after PWC meetings; Dixon to Curtin, doc. 1397, 22 Oct. 1942. AA/ACT-CRS A981/War41B.

3 Impossible Missions

1. For a brief assessment of his life see my essay in L. Kramer et al. (eds.), The Greats, Sydney, 1986.

2. See, for example, Kylie Tennant, Evatt, Politics and Justice, Sydney, 1970; R. Bell, Unequal Allies, Melbourne, 1977; and A. Renouf, Let Justice Be Done, Brisbane, 1985.


4. Day, op. cit., is the only historian to canvass the political angle, but it is only incidental to his main analysis.

5. For Evatt's school days, see Tennant, op. cit., Chs 1 and 2; for the school, see R.S. Horan, *Fort Street*, Sydney, 1990.


11. Evatt to Frankfurter and Evatt to Cripps, 8 March 1942 (cables), Evatt Collection [EC], Flinders University Library.


18. See Hopkins's memorandum, 1 April 1942, Harry Hopkins Papers [HHP], 209, Roosevelt Memorial Library. Also Bell, op. cit., p. 60.


21. The speech was broadcast on the Columbia Broadcasting System. For a copy, see Hornbeck to Evatt, 1 April 1942, HP, Australia/22.


24. Ibid.

25. Warnecke to The Herald (Melbourne), 28 April 1942 (cable), EC, 1942 trip.

26. Evatt to Curtin, 5 May 1942 (cable), EC, 1942 trip.
28. Evatt to Hodgson, 9 May 1942 (cable), SP, 474.
31. He also visited the daughter of the notorious Melbourne underworld figure and Labor supporter, John Wren, and dined at the Athenaeum with his old university friend, the famous Marxist archaeologist, V. Gordon Childe, see the letters, etc. in EC, London trip, 1942.
33. Robinson to Evatt, 18 May 1942, EC.
36. Joint Chiefs of Staff Meetings Minutes, Washington, Jan. 1942, RP, PSF, Joint Chiefs of Staff.
39. “The Defence of Australia”, memorandum by Dr Evatt, 26 May 1942, Washington Legation Files, A3300/2/228, AA; and Evatt to Curtin, 28 May 1942 (cable), SP, 474.
40. Evatt to Curtin, 28 May 1942, Churchill to Evatt, 3 July 1942 (cables), SP, 474.
42. War Cabinet Minutes, 30 June 1942, CRS A2673/2213, AA.
43. Prime Minister’s War Conference Minute, 1 June 1942, SP, 474.
44. Hopkins to Casey, 19 Dec. 1942, HHP(microfilm), roll 11.
45. Evatt summarised his instructions of 1 April 1943 in his later parliamentary speech, CPD, 14 Oct. 1943.
49. Curtin to Evatt, 13 May 1943 (cable), DAFP, VI, doc. 190.
53. Tennant, op. cit., p.142, wrongly attributes this story to the 1942 Spitfires deal.
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4. ibid.

5. “Post War Aviation”. Memorandum to Evatt, 8 June 1943, “Aviation — Post War” folder, Evatt Papers, Flinders University Library (FUL). Although the memorandum is not signed, it is most likely that it was written by Robinson since it tallies with other such memoranda being submitted to Evatt by his businessman adviser.

6. Report of background briefing, 18 June 1943, MS 4675, Smith Papers, NLA.


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Dominions Secretary, 26 November 1943, CAB 66/42, W.P. (43) 495, Public Record Office (PRO).

12. Report of background briefings, 6 and 7 September 1943, MS 4675, Smith Papers, NLA; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 September 1943.


14. Cable No. 267, Curtin to Churchill, 8 October 1943, PREM 3/63/8, PRO.

15. For a report of Curtin’s discussion with MacArthur, see, CRS A5954, Boxes, 306, 309 and 843, AA.


18. “British and World Commonwealth Co-operation”, speech by Curtin at the Triennial Federal Conference of the Labor Party, Canberra, 14 December 1943, CRS A5954, Box 294, AA.


21. ibid; War Cabinet Conclusions, 11 February 1944, CAB 65/41, W.M. (44) 18, PRO.

22. Letter, Curtin to Evatt. 5 February 1944, enclosing Message, Hull to Curtin. 3 February 1944, and initialled by Curtin, CRS A1608, Item Y41/1/1, AA; Thorne, *Allies of a Kind*, p. 486.


24. “Report on a visit to Australia, March 6th–28th, 1944”, by Captain Hillgarth, chief of naval intelligence with the Eastern Fleet, PREM 3/159/10, PRO.

25. Letter, Robinson to Evatt, 15 October 1944, “Robinson, W.S., 1942-45(b)” folder, Evatt Collection, FUL.


28. “Role of Australian Military Forces and Australia’s Post-War Defence and Security Policy”, Speech by Curtin, 28 February 1945, CRS A5954, Box 1605, AA.

5 Voices in the Wilderness


Labour Governments in Conflict”, PhD thesis, University College, the University of New South Wales, Canberra, 1990.


9. For the cables sent by the British government to Canberra about the Potsdam meetings see DO 35/1950, PRO and DO 35/1508, PRO. Also see CRS A1066/1 H45/1016/5/1, Australian Archives [hereafter AA].

10. See cables and letters in DO 35/1953, PRO.

11. See DO 35/2015, PRO and CRS A1066/1 P45/78/4/3, AA.

12. Cable 274, Dominions Office to Australian Government, 4 August 1945, CRS A3317 102/45, AA.

13. Cable D 1542, Attlee to Chifley, 24 August 1945, DO 35/2014, PRO.


15. The details of the Council meetings were forwarded to the Dominion Prime Ministers in a daily series of cables, see CRS A1066 H45/1016/5/1 and H45/1013/1/9, AA.


17. Cable D 1746, Addison to Australian Government, 19 September 1945 and cable EC 18, Hood to Dunk, 22 September 1945, CRS A1066 E/45/19/14, AA. Evatt reported that the proceedings were not satisfactory, in that the Council merely heard the other countries’ statements, and did not invite them, then or subsequently, to join the discussion, cable EC 18, Hood to Dunk, 23 September 1945, CRS A1066, E45/19/14, AA.

18. For Evatt’s proposal for a Dominion declaration see the minutes of Commonwealth meetings in DO 35/2017, PRO.

19. Circular cablegram to all Australian overseas posts, 11 October 1945, CRS A1066 H45/1016/5/1, AA.

20. Minutes of the Commonwealth meeting held on 3 October 1945, DO 35/2017, PRO.

21. The following section is based on Waters, “Anglo-Australian Diplomacy”, pp. 70–78.

22. The agreement reached at Moscow was forwarded to Australia in cable D 2315, Addison to Department of External Affairs [hereafter DEA], 27 December 1945, CRS A1066 H45/1016/4/1, AA.

23. For details of these exchanges see PREM 8/313, PRO.
25. Cables D 2202 and 2203, Addison to Chifley, 7 December 1945 (received in Canberra on 8 December), CRS A1066 H45/1016/4/1, AA. See FO 800/446, PRO.
26. See FO 800/446, PRO.
27. Cable 219, DEA to Australian Legation, Moscow, 14 December 1945, CRS A1066 H45/1016/4/1, AA.
28. Cable 344, Maloney to DEA, 19 December 1945, CRS A1066 H45/1016/4/1, AA.
29. Bell, Unequal Allies, pp. 198–201.
32. PMM (46) 15th Meeting, Confidential Annex, Minute 3, 20 May 1946, PREM 8/312, PRO.
33. See record of conversation between Evatt and Hector McNeil, 30 April 1946, DO 35/2040, PRO.
34. Cable 2, Evatt to Fraser, 20 May 1946, CRS A3317 391/46, AA.
35. Bullock, Bevin, Foreign Secretary, pp. 259–86.
37. See cable PC 3, Australian Delegation, Paris to DEA, 31 July 1946; cable PC 4, Australian Delegation, Paris to DEA, 1 August 1946; cable PC 8, Australian Delegation, Paris to DEA, 4 August 1946 and cable PC 11, Australian Delegation, Paris to DEA, 9 August 1946; all in CRS A1067 E46/38/14, AA.
38. See, for example, The Times, 1 August 1946.
39. For the views of the Australian delegation on the eve of the conference see cable PC 2, Australian Delegation, Paris to DEA, 29 July 1946, CRS A1067 E46/38/14, AA.
41. Cable PC 11, Australian Delegation, Paris to DEA, 9 August 1946, CRS A1067/1 E46/38/14, AA.
42. Burton was described by a Dominions Office official as “Evatt’s ‘ideas man’ and the latter [Evatt] is extraordinarily dependent on Burton for his brain waves”, letter, B. Cockram to G. Boyd-Shannon, DO, 2 September 1946, DO 35/1833, PRO.
44. For the text of Evatt’s statement announcing Australia’s amendments, see cable Austforafs, London to External Canberra, 21 August 1946, CRS A3317 320/46, AA. For details as to how the amendments were presented and the results of the votes taken on them see the final report of the Australian delegation to the conference in CRS A4311/1 35/1, AA and the fortnightly delegation reports in CRS A1067/1 E46/38/26, AA. Also see the report by W.E. Dunk entitled: “Impressions of the 1946 Paris Peace Conference” n.d., CRS A1067 E46/38/7, AA. For a full list of Australian amendments see the statements and memoranda in DO 35/1833, PRO.
45. For Evatt’s views on the Soviet Union’s tactics at the conference and on the disposal of the Italian colonies, see minutes of meeting of British Commonwealth delegations held on 20 August 1946 in “Paris Peace Conference: United Kingdom
Delegation Circular No. 11", DO 35/1833, PRO. Beasley, in a meeting with F.E. Cumming Bruce, a Dominions Office official, said that Australia's interest in the procedure for the disposal of the Italian colonies was due to its repercussions for future procedure for disposing of the Japanese possessions, from which procedure Australia wanted to exclude the Soviet Union and France, see record of meeting on 18 September 1946 signed by F.E. Cumming Bruce, DO 35/1833, PRO.

46. Sydney Morning Herald, 19 October 1946.

47. Cable PC 34, Beasley to Evatt, 6 September 1946, CRS A1067 E46/38/14, AA.

48. Letter, J.E. Stephenson to E. Matchig, 25 September 1946, DO 35/1833, PRO.

49. For Soviet press criticism of the Australians in Paris see DO 35/1213, PRO.


51. A copy of the final report of the Australian delegation to the conference is in CRS A4311/1 35/1, AA. This report is an essential source for Australian involvement at the Paris peace conference.

52. See CRS A1067, E46/38/27 and CRS A1067/1, E46/15/13, AA.


54. See CRS A1068/1, E47/15/5/2/6, AA.

55. The instructions were sent in cable 10, Evatt to Beasley and Hodgson, 11 January 1947; cable 13, Evatt to Beasley and Hodgson, 13 January 1947; cable 14, Evatt to Beasley and Hodgson, 13 January 1947 and cable 23, Evatt to Beasley and Hodgson, 22 January 1947, CRS A1068/1, E47/15/5/2/6, AA. The written submissions made by the Australian government to the Deputies are in this file. Also see CRS A1068/1, E47/15/5/1/6, AA.

56. The Australian government made an exception of the case of the frontiers, recognising that no progress would be made unless the frontiers already agreed upon by the Great Powers were adhered to.

57. The record of Hodgson’s appearance before the Deputies on 23 January is in CRS A1068/1 E47/15/5/2/6, AA. For Australian reports of the discussions of the Deputies in London see CRS A1068/1, E47/15/5/2/11, AA.

58. Cable 58, DEA to Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, 24 February 1947, CRS A1068/1, E47/15/5/2/6, AA.

59. Details of Evatt’s diplomacy are in CRS A1068/1 E47/15/5/2/6, AA.

60. Cable 56, Evatt to Beasley, 27 February 1947, A1068/1, E47/15/5/2/6, AA.

61. Evatt’s proposal for a Commonwealth unit was put to the British government at a meeting between Beasley, Addison, Strang and Matchig on 28 February, the outcome of which was reported in cable 71, Beasley to Evatt, 28 February 1947, CRS A1068/1, E47/15/5/2/6, AA.

62. Cable 80, DEA to Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, 30 March 1947, CRS A1068/1, E47/15/5/2/6, AA. The reports from the Australian legation, Moscow, are in CRS A1068/1, E47/15/5/1/10, AA; see particularly Tel. 67, Deschamps, Moscow to DEA, 22 March 1947, in which Deschamps described a meeting with Bevin as unsatisfactory “as it reveals a ‘great power’ attitude on the part of the Foreign Secretary”; See also cable 69, Deschamps to DEA, 24 March 1947 and cable 75, Deschamps to DEA, 26 March 1947.

63. Cable 619, Bevin, Moscow, to Attlee and Addison, 7 April 1947 and cable 667, Attlee to Bevin, 10 April 1947, Com/47/10, FO 800/444, PRO.
64. Reply by cable 70, Addison to DEA, 10 April 1947, CRS A1068/1, E47/15/5/2/6, AA.

65. See for example the Foreign Office draft brief entitled, “Draft Brief on Procedure for the United Kingdom Deputy” sent under cover of letter from Bevin to Addison, 24 July 1947, DO 35/2804, PRO. The brief states: “In this connexion the real battle will be fought in the CFM itself. Whether we and the Dominions like it or not, the association of other Allied States at any stage is largely a psychological sop, the actual decision being taken, as indeed throughout history, by the Great Powers.”

66. Letter, Bevin to Attlee, 16 April 1947, Conf/47/7, FO 800/447, PRO.


6 Liberal Internationalism in Practice


3. The sources for this section are the cables of instructions sent from Canberra to the Australian delegation at the United Nations located in CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA, especially cablegram 3, DEA to Hodgson (New York), 24 March 1946.


8. Minutes of meeting on 17 September 1945, DO 35/2017, PRO.


12. Unsigned/undated DEA paper, “Proposed Commission on Persia”, CRS A1838/T189 854/10/2 part 1, AA.

13. Sydney Morning Herald, 21 January 1946; cablegram D82, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs (hereafter SSDA) to DEA, 21 January 1946 and cablegram 552,
Makin (London) to Evatt, 25 January 1946, both in CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA.

14. Cablegram 592, Makin (London) to Evatt, 25 January 1946, CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA. In general the Official Records of the Security Council for 1946 are brief, so reliance has been placed on the detailed cables describing these meetings sent by the Australian Delegation to the Security Council back to Canberra. The Official Records of the Security Council confirm the accuracy of the Australian records.

15. Cablegram UND 13, DEA to Australian Delegation, United Nations Assembly, London, 28 January 1946, CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA.

16. Cablegram 633, Makin (London) to Evatt, 29 January 1946, CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA.

17. Cablegram 703, Makin (London) to Evatt, 31 January 1946, CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA.

18. Evatt’s views were reported later to the British delegation in New York by Australian representatives, W.R. Hodgson and P.M.C. Hasluck, see letter, B. Cockram to G. Boyd-Shannon, Dominions Office, London 28 March 1946, DO 35/2000, PRO.


20. Cablegram D239, SSDA to DEA, 15 March 1946, CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA.

21. Cablegram 175, Hood (London) to DEA, 15 March 1946, CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA.


24. Cablegram 325, Oldham (Washington) to Evatt, 20 March 1946, CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA.

25. ibid.

26. Cablegram D264, SSDA to DEA, 22 March 1946, CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA.

27. Cablegram D262, SSDA to DEA, 21 March 1946, CRS A1838 854/10/2 part 1, AA.


30. Cablegram D278, SSDA to DEA, 26 March 1946 and undated/unsigned DEA paper, “The Security Council” both in CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA.

31. Cablegram 359, Australian Legation, Washington, to DEA, 27 March 1946, A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA.


33. Cablegram UN7, DEA to Hodgson, 28 March 1946, CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA.
34. Cablegram 53, Cadogan (New York) to Foreign Office (hereafter FO), 2 April 1946, DO 35/2000, PRO.
35. Minute, J.G. Ward to G. Jebb, 3 April 1946, FO 371/57243, U3851/1043/70, PRO.
36. For the exchange of views between the Australian and British governments see cablegram 153, DEA to SSDA, 2 April 1946, CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA and cablegram 143, Dominions Office to DEA, 6 April 1946, DO 35/2000, PRO.
37. Cablegram 380, Australian Delegation, United Nations Assembly to DEA, 28 March 1946 and cablegram 386, Australian Delegation, United Nations Assembly, 29 March 1946, both in CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA.
38. Cablegram 430, Australian Legation, Washington to DEA, 3 April 1946, CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA.
40. Evatt's instructions were contained in cablegram UNY 19, DEA to Hodgson, 3 April 1946, CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1. For reports of this meeting see cablegram 430, Australian Legation, Washington to DEA, 3 April 1946, CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA; cablegram 60, Cadogan (New York) to FO, 4 April 1946, DO 35/2000, PRO and Age, Melbourne, 5 April 1946.
41. For Evatt's instructions see cablegram 533, DEA to Hodgson (New York), 4 April 1946, CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA. For reports of the meeting see cablegram 434, Australian Delegation, United Nations Assembly to DEA, 4 April 1946, CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA and cablegram 64, Cadogan (New York) to FO, 4 April 1946, FO 371/52671, PRO.
42. Unsigned/undated DEA paper "The Security Council", CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1, AA.
44. Cablegram 66, Cockram (New York) to Machtig (Dominions Office), 4 April 1946, DO 35/2000, PRO.
49. Hasluck, Workshop of Security, Ch. 12.
50. For American press reports, see cablegram 449, Australian Legation, Washington to DEA, 6 April 1946, CRS A1838/T189, 854/10/2 part 1 and despatch, C.V. Kelleway, Australian Consul-General, New York, to J. Oldham, Charge d'Affaires, Australian Legation, New York, 15 May 1946, CRS A1067, A46/2/3/6, AA.
51. See, for example, speech by T.W. White in the House of Representatives on 22 March 1946, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, volume 186, p. 554; question without notice asked by W.J. Hutchinson in the House of Representatives on 3 April 1946, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, volume 186, p. 891.
52. Argus, 5 April 1946; Sydney Morning Herald and Age, 4 to 8 April 1946.
7 Evatt and the Indonesian Revolution

2. Evatt to Bruce, 20 November 1943: Australian Archives, CRS A989, item E43/600/5/1/5.
4. Department of External Affairs internal memorandum, 6 March 1944: AA CRS A989, item E43/600/5/1/5.
5. War Cabinet Minutes Nos 1885 (10 February 1942) and 2656 (15 February 1943), AA CRS A571, item 42/944.
6. Correspondence between Lt Gen. E.K. Smart (Australian military representative, London) and Major General F.E.W. Simpson (Assistant Chief of the Imperial General Staff), 20 September 1943, Australian War Memorial 54, 16/2/3.
7. Baron F.C. Van Aerssen (Netherlands Minister to Australia) to External Affairs, 4 September 1944, in Advisory War Cabinet agenda no. 22/1944, 20 September 1944, AA CRS 2679.
9. ibid.
10. War Cabinet minute no. 3807, 21 September 1944, AA CRS A2676, item 3807.
12. AMM, Washington, to LHQ, Melbourne, 18 April 1945, Advisory War Council agenda no. 30/1945, AA CRS A2679.
14. War Cabinet minute no. 4293, 28 June 1945, AA CRS A2676, item 4293.
15. Chifley to van Aerssen, 7 September 1945, Shedden Papers, Box 562, AA.
17. Secretary, Department of the Army, to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, 22 October 1943; Bruce to Curtin, 1 November 1943: AA CRS A989, item E43/600/5/1/3.
18. Evatt to Bruce, 20 November 1943, AA CRS A989, item E43/600/5/1/5.
19. Van Aerssen to Evatt, 8 March 1944, AA CRS A989, item E43/600/5/1/5.
21. "Australian Relations with the Netherlands Indies", memorandum by J.D.J. Hood, 22 September 1944, AA CRS A989, item E43/600/5/1/7.
25. ibid., pp. 35–36.
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27. Burton to Evatt and Hood, 14 October 1945, AA CRS A1838, item 401/3/1/1.
29. DEA to Evatt, 7 November 1945; Burton to Evatt and Hood, 8 November 1945; Evatt to Burton, 7 November 1945: ibid., nos 367, 369, 372.
30. Chifley to Attlee, 31 October 1945, ibid., no. 352.
32. Mountbatten to Chiefs of Staff, SEACOS 538, 5 November 1945, PRO CAB 105/162.
33. See Ball to DEA, 10 and 11 November 1945, AA CRS A1838, item 401/1/2/1.
34. Ball to Burton, 17 November 1945, DAFP, VIII: no. 399.
35. MacMahon Ball to DEA, 22 November 1945, ibid., no. 405.
38. Evatt to Maki and Chifley, 23 November 1945, ibid., no. 410.
40. ibid., nos 410 and 411.
41. Ball to Dunk, 17 December 1945, ibid., no. 458.
42. Chifley to Evatt, 26 November 1945, ibid., no. 414.
43. Burton to Evatt, 2 November 1945, ibid., no. 357.
44. Far Eastern Department, “Brief for the Secretary of State”, 6 December 1945, PRO FO 371/46408 F12362/6398/61; minute by Addison, 6 December 1945, PRO DO35/1581.
45. Chifley to Evatt, 26 November 1945, DAFP, VIII: no 414.
46. Proud to Burton, 14 January 1946; to Evatt, 22 January 1946: AA CRS A1066, item P45/47/10/2.
47. Minute by Sir Eric Machtig, Permanent Under Secretary, Dominions Office, 28 January 1946, PRO DO 35/1579.

8 H.V. Evatt and the Palestine Question

1. This paper was presented to the 1990 conference on the life and work of Dr H.V. Evatt and is based upon a thesis presented in August 1987 at the Australian National University.
5. Letter, C. Venn Pilcher to Evatt, 18 January 1948, “External Affairs — Palestine” file, Evatt Collection, Flinders University Library (FUL); as a symbol of its regard for Dr Evatt, Israel planted a forest as an evergreen tribute to him.
8. A copy of the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine appears at Annex No. 7,
9. ibid., Annex 1, Document A/286, p. 183
11. The so-called neutral States on UNSCOP were Australia, Canada, Iran, India, Guatemala, Peru, Uruguay, Sweden, the Netherlands, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia.
14. ibid., p. 87.
15. ibid., p. 350.
18. ibid., pp. 8, 18.
19. ibid., p. 15.
20. ibid., p. 16.
21. ibid., pp. 8–9, 19.
23. The UNSCOP Majority Report was signed by Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden and Uruguay; the UNSCOP Minority Report was signed by Iran, Yugoslavia and India.
25. ibid.
27. A1838/252, op. cit.
34. H.V. Evatt, op. cit., p. 141.
35. The Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations informed the Department of External Affairs of the situation in Cable I.20042, 20.9.1947, A1838/252, op. cit.
36. CN Vol. 18, No. 9, October 1947, p. 586.
37. Reported in Argus, Melbourne, 8 February 1947, p. 3; Sydney Morning Herald, 29 September 1947, p. 3.
9 Da Heer Evatt: The O’Keefe Case

3. P.E. Teppema aan de Heer Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken, 10 February 1949, “Deportatie Mrs A. O’Keefe-Dumais”, p. 3. In 1988 the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ files on the O’Keefe case were still held in the Ministry (O’Keefe Files (BZ)). The belief that Australian immigration policy was purely a domestic issue was a view which had been held by all major political parties since Federation. See Sean Brawley, The White Peril: Foreign Relations and Asian Immigration to Australasia and North America, 1919–1978, Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1995.
4. Teppema’s notes are still held in the O’Keefe Files (BZ).
6. ibid.; This was a proposition Calwell never accepted.
7. See note 5.
8. ibid.
9. Prior to Teppema’s arrival in 1947, Prime Minister Chifley made a similar accusation to Calwell’s in the House of Representatives. On 3 August 1946 Chifley told Parliament, ’I am not aware of any lack of cordiality between the Dutch and Australian peoples. I am of course cognizant of a certain degree of feeling between the representatives of the Dutch Government on the one hand and myself and the Minister for External Affairs on the other ... I would have thought that diplomats would have been serving their countrymen much better by trying to settle the differences that exist between the Dutch Government and its own subjects than by engaging in a newspaper controversy in this country.” The accusation resulted in the personal estrangement of Teppema’s predecessor, Baron F.C. van Aerssen, and Chifley. See L.F. Crisp, Ben Chifley: A Biography, Melbourne: Longmans, 1963, p. 283; and M. George, Australia and the Indonesian Revolution, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980, p. 59.
10. See note 5.
11. ibid.
12. The Dutch believed Evatt’s attitude towards the Netherlands had been governed by the belief that the Dutch could be an important ally in his quest for the presidency of the United Nations General Assembly. While Renouf claims the Dutch considered Evatt hostile to them, Teppema had maintained a fairly harmonious relationship, both politically and personally. The O’Keefe affair, however, severely tested that relationship. See A. Renouf, *Let Justice be Done: The Foreign Policy of Dr. H.V. Evatt*, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1983, p. 160.

13. Chifley had approached Teppema a couple of weeks earlier to offer his opinion on the latest Dutch police action. Chifley, in what he called a “heart to heart” with Teppema, told the Dutch Minister his government had made a “colossal blunder”. He did not appear to be driven by a rage which would manifest itself in a clandestine attack, using Calwell as the mouthpiece. The discussion is cited in Crisp, p. 283. Many journalists at the time believed Chifley and Evatt were involved and that the attack was orchestrated at the Caucus meeting held on the morning of Calwell’s outburst. While it is certain Chifley sought a united stand on the cogency of the case to deport the O’Keefes (a letter to a private citizen, Mr John West, from Chifley on the 9 February, before Calwell’s outburst that afternoon, read “I desire to inform you that the action taken by the Minister for Immigration in regard to Mrs O’Keefe has my approval”, AA A446/1 59/60956), it would seem, at least from Evatt’s testimony to Teppema, that although Calwell may have offered his Dutch conspiracy theories to Caucus, Chifley and Evatt were not expecting him to enunciate them on the floor of the House.

14. Codet telegram, 10 February 1949, Teppema aan de Hervier Minister Buitenlands Zaken; Tempema aan Elink Schuurman, Chef de Directie Verre Oosten, Batavia, 11 February 1949, O’Keefe Files (BZ).
16. CPD, 11 February 1949, p. 201.
18. Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken aan Teppema, 14 February 1949, O’Keefe Files (BZ).
19. Minister van Buitenland Zaken aan Teppema, 13 February 1949, O’Keefe Files (BZ).
23. ibid.
24. P.E. Teppema to H.V. Evatt, O’Keefe Files (BZ).
25. H.V. Evatt to P.E. Teppema, 16 February 1949, O’Keefe Files (BZ).
27. The Dutch had been aware of Burton’s views from the time of his appointment to Secretary of External Affairs. See Memorandum, 10 June 1947; and Teppema aan Minister van Buitenland Zaken, 20 February 1949, “Betrekkingen Australie-Nederland”, O’Keefe Files (BZ).
28. Unfortunately Dr Burton cannot shed any decisive light on who was the author of the letter. Understandably after forty-one years, he cannot recall writing the letter,
although it would not have been unusual for him to draft such a letter. Further evidence to suggest the letter was not written by Burton is the claim by P.G. Edwards that Evatt and Burton were in the throes of a personal estrangement which had followed Burton’s attempts to stand for the House of Representatives as a Labor candidate. Edwards claims that Evatt feared he was about to be railroaded by Chifley and Burton. See P.G. Edwards, *Prime Ministers and Diplomats — The Making of Australian Foreign Policy*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 184. Edwards’ claim that the relationship was extremely cold would make it all the more doubtful that Evatt would have allowed Burton to write a personal letter for him. While Burton himself claims no such estrangement occurred, Teppema was certainly aware of the tension between the two men. Evatt told him, “I even have to watch Burton carefully.” Teppema aan Elink Schuurman, 10 February 1949, O’Keefe Files (BZ).

30. An interesting sidelight to the case is the circumstance that the “British Officer”, as the Dutch Documents label him, was an MI5 Officer who had been sent to Australia to help establish ASIO.
32. P.E. Teppema to H.V. Evatt, 21 February 1949, O’Keefe Files (BZ).
33. CPD, 9 February 1949, p. 66.
34. *Hansard* has Evatt claiming his meeting with Teppema was confidential when answering Harrison’s question on the 11th. Teppema was apparently unaware of this. It is interesting to note that neither the press reports of the 12th nor the Dutch Legation’s transcripts of the debate in the House repeat Evatt’s claim.
35. Teppema aan Minister van Buitenland Zaken, 23 February 1949, “Onderhoud met Dr Evatt”, Chef Dirvo Batavia, O’Keefe Files (BZ).
37. ibid.
38. It is interesting to view this comment by Teppema in light of John Burton’s claim that the only instruction the Department was given by Evatt for several years was “follow the Charter”. See Ch. 1.
39. Teppema aan Minister van Buitenland Zaken, 21 February 1949, O’Keefe Files (BZ).
42. ibid.
44. Renouf, *Let Justice Be Done*, p. 3.

10 **Foreign Minister for a Small Power**

1. See material in Public Record Office (PRO) CAB 65/28; CAB 65/33; CAB 66/30, CAB 66/31 CAB 66/33; Australian Archives (AA) AA 2937, no item number, “Post-Colonial Policy”. I have taken up the debate at length in my thesis,


4. Reynolds, Ch. 4.


6. Reynolds, Ch. 6; material in PRO CAB 66/30-33; CPD Vol. 176, p. 576.


10. Reynolds, Ch. 1.

11. ibid; AA A2682, Min. 431.


14. Material in AA A3300/101; A2937, no item no., Russia (Political: Secret Telegrams); CPD Vol. 169, pp. 1084–90.


17. Reynolds, Ch. 5; M. George, *Australia and the Indonesian Revolution*, Melbourne, 1980; AA A989, 43/735/324; PRO CAB 66/4 and DO 35/1895.

18. Reynolds, Ch. 5.


20. ibid.; PRO DO 35/1213 and CAB 66/41. WP (43) 413; AA A989, 43/735/32; A2937, no item no., “Post War Colonial Policy”.

21. Reynolds, Ch. 4.


23. PRO CAB 66/48, WP(44)169 and DO 35/1884-85; AA A989, 43/735/1021.

24. Reynolds, Ch. 6.

25. ibid.


27. Gardner, op. cit.; McFarlane, op. cit.

For an Australian politician who never became prime minister, Dr Herbert Vere Evatt casts a long shadow over the country’s political history.

Evatt is credited by many with creating an independent Australian foreign policy. He was the leading spokesman for the small powers at the San Francisco conference that established the United Nations, and steered Australia’s foreign policy through the postwar years. As Opposition Leader he also ensured the defeat of the 1951 referendum that sought to ban the Communist Party.

This collection concentrates on the foreign policy achievements of this controversial figure. From 1941 to 1949, Evatt had to cope with a war that threatened the very survival of Australia, and in the immediate postwar era, to face the challenges of a world changed beyond recognition by the machinations of the Cold War and the liberating effects of decolonisation.

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