

THE

# Sydney Institute

## QUARTERLY



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# *MEDIA WATCH*

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## “YES, WE HAVE NO CONSERVATIVES” AT THE ABC

In his address to The Sydney Institute in October 2006, the newly appointed ABC managing director Mark Scott promised that there would be a “further diversity of voices” on the public broadcaster. However, in the six years since this commitment was made, the ABC has not become more pluralist but, rather, less so. The fact is that there is not one conservative presenter or producer or editor or paid regular commentator on any of the ABC’s prominent outlets. Not one. So how does the ABC respond to the criticism that it engages numerous leftists and left-of-centre presenters and producers and editors and paid regular commentators but not one conservative? By the familiar tactic of denial. That’s how.

The left-of-centre Jon Faine is perhaps the best known ABC personality in Melbourne. On his Radio 774 program on 27 November 2012, Faine interviewed ABC Radio National leftist presenter Phillip Adams and put it to him that, in the ABC, “at various times there’s been a search for the right-wing Phillip Adams”. Adams responded that “there’s been a whole list of right-wing Phillip Adamses” and named Tim Blair, Imre Salusinszky, Michael Duffy and Amanda Vanstone. In fact Adams was a vicious critic of the Blair/Salusinszky program on Radio National which lasted for only a couple of months in 2001. Duffy quit Radio National in 2012 after several years presenting *Counterpoint*. Amanda Vanstone filled in for a few months on *Counterpoint* this year after Duffy resigned from the ABC.

Then, on 29 November 2012, “David from Woodend” phoned into Jon Faine’s 774 program and asked him to “name me one conservative that hosts a mainstream current affairs show on the ABC”. Faine, in full ABC denial mode, responded: “Michael Duffy hosts a show on Radio National called *Counterpoint*” and added “there’s a presenter in Perth of a top-rating [ABC] radio station”. There were three problems with this response. First, *Counterpoint* is not a mainstream, meaning prominent, program – it airs at 4 pm on Mondays. Second, Michael Duffy quit the program in June 2012. Third, Faine did not know the name of the token ABC conservative 3525 kilometres away in Perth. By the way, it’s Eoin Cameron – who is hardly a national identity.

Jon Faine and Phillip Adams struggled to name one conservative who has presented a prominent ABC program in the past decade. Adams’ reference to Amanda Vanstone, a minister in John Howard’s government, is misleading. She merely filled in for a month on *Counterpoint* following Duffy’s resignation. In any event, *Counterpoint* is was not even mentioned when the network schedule for 2012 was announced a year ago. The fact remains that the ABC is replete with leftist and left-of-centre presenters and producers. Including Phillip Adams, Jon Faine, Jonathan Holmes, Tony Jones, Fran Kelly, Peter McEvoy (executive producer Q&A), Linda Mottram, Tim Palmer, Margaret Pomeranz, Robyn Williams plus Waleed Aly, Jonathan Green and Julian Morrow who took up their appointments on Radio National in 2012.

This year ABC management replaced the left-of-centre Jonathan Green with the left-of-centre Chip Rolley as editor of *The Drum* and *The Drum Online*. In making this decision, the ABC rejected an application from a young well-qualified journalist who had substantial experience as the opinion page editor of a major broadsheet. Chip Rolley’s appointment merely confirmed that – contrary to Mark Scott’s promise – the ABC remains essentially a Conservative-Free Zone.

# WHAT LIGHT, WHICH HILL? TRUE BELIEVERS AND THE BATTLE FOR THE LABOR BRAND

Stephen Matchett

**F**or readers who may have missed it (all well on Mars?) the Australian Labor Party is in strife.

You don't have to ask its enemies, rusted on supporters have queued up to list its troubles for years now. The latest crop includes books by four former members of Labor governments and one senior staffer, Steve Bracks (*A Premier's State*), Maxine McKew (*Tales From The Political Trenches*), Lindsay Tanner (*Sideshow – Dumbing Down Democracy*), Frank Sartor (*The Fog on The Hill*) and Troy Bramston (*Looking for the Light on The Hill*). As to solutions, they generally suggest doing more for the workers, excluding spivs and enlisting activists, as long as they aren't too green, by which they do not refer to experience.

## IS LABOR FIT FOR PURPOSE?

But the problems they outline are far more profound than the old fear of factional control or the present one about those incidental ideologues, the Greens, eroding Labor's control of a few inner city seats.

One way and another these authors all worry whether the ALP is fit for purpose. It's the sort of question political parties, polling poorly, always ask. But as Australia's oldest party, Labor's problems are deeper. The party has a power structure dating from the eighteenth century and a purpose that has regressed to a nineteenth century local government model.

Back in the 1920s, Lewis Namier overturned the orthodoxy on eighteenth century British history, identifying the way webs of patronage rather than ideology drove politics.<sup>i</sup> His work has gone in and out of fashion but it seems certain that from Walpole to the chartists the big political power brokers acquired and extended authority by putting their own men into safe House of Commons seats.

As Michael W McCahill puts it;

**While they never dominated the House of Commons, MPs returned by members of the House of Lords were an important factor in shaping its political personality. As well as serving as their patrons' legislative agents, especially on private and local business, those members reinforced the priorities of the peerage. ... Because the ties which bound most MPs to their patrons were real and enduring, they limited the degree to which organised public opinion could influence the outcome of deliberations in the lower house.**<sup>ii</sup>

Naturally the comparison between British politics then and Australian politics now is not complete – no one addresses union leaders and machine bosses, as "Your Grace". But, otherwise, it sounds more than a little like the way Labor power brokers allocate seats.

The second similarity, with politics past, dates from the early nineteenth century, when Americans created the self-sustaining political machine, with machine bosses using the state as a source of jobs and contracts to acquire and reward supporters.

Much like the way the NSW Labor Party machine first defied and then defeated Morris Iemma when he tried to put the interests of the people of NSW above those of a few thousand public sector workers, by selling the electricity generators.<sup>iii</sup> What was Premier Iemma thinking? As Tammany Hall operator G W Plunkitt put it in his famous political handbook, "How are you going to interest our young men in their country if you have no offices to give them when they work for their party?"<sup>iv</sup>

There is nothing unusual about the idea of political machines, which run to benefit the blokes at the top. But as Kelsey Grammer, the mayor of Chicago in the TV drama *Boss*, demonstrates machines work best where there is most patronage to disperse.<sup>v</sup> And that is at the service provider level of government, which employs a lot of people and where administration matters more than policy.

In Australia this means the states, where Labor traditionally stays strong by keeping the public

servants happy. As the Schott report into the NSW public service put it,

**Workforce management has in the recent past been politicised in some circumstances and in some clusters, with inappropriate weight given to union views. The Commission has been advised that many staff in Human Resources (HR) sections see themselves as employee advocates, rather than ensuring the needs of the business are met. This is compounded by capability gaps and attitude issues. There is a strong resistance to change and innovation.**<sup>vi</sup>

The problem for Labor is that patronage culture is institutionalised in federal Labor, leaving the party with a service provider culture at the policy level of government. Perhaps the Rudd Government's greatest disaster was the way ministers responded to the Global Financial Crisis with public works spending – programs the Commonwealth's policy and pensions focused bureaucracies were not equipped to administer. Thus the Auditor-General pointed to the "lack of experience" in project management as a cause of the pink batts fiasco.<sup>vii</sup>

And just as premiers like to keep their own workforces happy, so the Gillard Government sees public sector workers as a core constituency. While there is no money for an increase in the grotesquely low dole, Canberra is committed to pay rises for unionised social workers employed by federally funded independent agencies, on the grounds that, as they are mainly women, it is an equity issue.<sup>viii</sup>

The stark point is that Labor is in national political strife not entirely because it has no idea what it stands for but because it has a very clear idea of who it exists to serve. The problem is there are not enough union officials and public sector service providers to get it elected.

So what is to be done? These authors, like their many predecessors since the electorate rejected economically rational, social reforming Labor in 1996, have many clues – but most are airy aphorisms.

There are two responses to the state of the party in these books. The common one is to urge Labor to explain what it stands for and present itself as a change agent. And this is more than adequate if you believe that the electorate only needs reminding of what they know in their hearts - that only the ALP stands between ordinary Australians and the conservative plot to send them into serfdom.

Then there is Troy Bramston, who sets out what he believes Labor should stand for in detail, very detailed detail, before making a case for structural change.

## **STEVE BRACKS' OPTIMISM**

Among the optimists, Steve Bracks' memoirs define the dilemma the party faces.<sup>ix</sup> He details the performance of his politically competent and administratively efficient government without explaining what it stood for, beyond not being that terrible Kennett bloke.

**If we don't believe that a particular policy is going to advance the cause of fairness and opportunities, then we should not pursue it. Our values compromise the filter through which we must view all the issues that confront us. ... I think Labor really needs to revisit its core values: a better standard of living and better opportunities for all Australians.**

The problem with this branding is that it is only effective if the conservatives oppose equality of opportunity and the welfare state, which they manifestly will not do - at least if they want to win elections. As Bracks accepts, "Many of the issues that were once the province of one political group are now shared between parties."

Bracks assumes Labor is permanently the party of change – that it is forever 1972, when Gough Whitlam roared into office on the then not unreasonable promise of injecting life into a barely breathing polity: "So what does being a Labor person mean now? I think it means the same thing it has always meant – it means being someone who is intent on promoting change."

The problem is the ALP has spent 15 years distancing itself from the heroic reforms of the Hawke-Keating Government. When it comes to a new round of structural reforms to tax, health, welfare and industrial relations Labor, like the conservatives, shows no sign of being up for the reforming fight.

And "fairness" is a zero sum game. What is fair for consumers who benefit from reduced protection on everything from cars to clothes is not fair to workers who make them. Industrial deregulation may improve productivity and thus generate jobs for ordinary Australians, but it manifestly makes life harder for union officials. And guess whose case for a fair go gets the better hearing under Labor's existing structures?

## MAXINE MCKEW'S OUTSIDER PERSPECTIVE

There is more of the woolly same in Maxine McKew's self-regarding, score-settling memoir of her one term in the House of Representatives.<sup>x</sup>

**How about some principles? Not issues, but principles. So when we talk about refugees, we speak about the *principle* of fair treatment and Labor's historical *principled* recognition of international treaties.**

Easy to argue but harder to implement in the world of real politics where there are legitimate opposing arguments over what policy actually is fair, let alone in the national interest.

Given McKew's admiration for Kevin Rudd and antipathy for Julia Gillard, analysing the party she served so briefly is not her primary purpose. But she is an astute woman with a clear and reasonable idea of the three things she believes Labor needs to do - decide who runs the party, how it communicates with the electorate and what it stands for.

For a start, McKew brings an outsider's perspective to party power structures, rejecting a system that allowed union leaders to bring down Rudd:

**Sooner or later the question of who "owns" the Labor Party will have to be addressed. It is surely beyond tolerable that a modern party can have its fortunes determined by half-a-dozen large trade union leaders who see themselves as being more influential than the party's elected parliamentarians.**

Presumably, McKew refers to the number of unionists rather than the corpulence of the comrades who lead them but she makes a point as old as the party itself - Labor was arguing about who gave the orders at its foundation and has not stopped since. But she makes a point that goes to the heart of the problem that destroyed the Iemma Government in NSW - who do Labor MPs exist to serve, the extra-parliamentary powerbrokers or the people?

And McKew loathes the party professionals - colleagues like Julia Gillard, who did not take her ideas as seriously as McKew thinks they merited and the minders and machine machiavells who told her what to do and who dumb down politics. Thus, she proudly announces that she was among the first to drop "the patronising and lazy" and "working families" language.

Above all, McKew argues it is time for the party to present ideas to the electorate in "an elevated national conversation that treats voters like grown ups". Good-oh, but what should the paladins of principle talk about? And here McKew hits the Bracks problem. Just as he appeals to the past to claim Labor is the only party of change, McKew points to great Hawke-Keating reforms and deplores the way the "political class" - which includes everybody from Kim Beazley to Julia Gillard - have given up on the "contest of ideas":

**Labor needed to craft the 21st-century version of the economic reform agenda inherited from Hawke and Keating.**

And that would be? According to McKew, "There is a confident, sophisticated Labor story to tell about our present and our future and it needs to be based on our capacity for innovation, the creativity of our workforce and our openness to others."

This means whatever Ms McKew wants it to mean - which is not the same as the poll-driven machine hardheads think it means, especially those operating from a state political rather than national policy perspective. (Note for the file Ms McKew - former Governor-General Michael Jeffrey is not a knight and "Unions NSW boss" is Mark not Paul Lennon, the latter used to be premier of Tasmania)

## LINDSAY TANNER BLAMES THE MEDIA

This is not to dismiss the problem of what Labor should stand for. It also stumps Lindsay Tanner, a political and policy thinker with many more runs on the board than McKew.<sup>xi</sup>

Lindsay Tanner acknowledges that it is hard to build brand identity (a concept he is ambivalent about), "at a state level, where genuine differences of ideology and issues have disappeared". But media hacks and party flacks also variously cause and compound (Tanner is equally firm in his attitude to everybody who upset him) the problem:

**The media are to blame because reporters and editors turn our permanent election campaign into a contest to entertain rather than inform. The media maintain the pretence that they are reporting a campaign that exists independently of them. In fact, the media are the campaign, because their editorial decisions determine what parties and candidates do and don't do.**

It is an understandable argument for those who believe the baying populists of commercial talkback radio and their sneering peers on the ABC can decide

one seat. However, it is not an argument recognised by leader writers at the *Australian Financial Review* and *The Australian*, who are always urging governments of all persuasions to return to the path of reform, or their Fairfax colleagues who denounce ministers for listening to the electorate on asylum seekers and illegal immigrants.

While the reptiles of the press attract most venom, Lindsey Tanner is equally aggrieved by their partners in snake-oil sales, the political professional:

**The democratic process is undermined by the dominance of cynical apparatchiks who are skilled at manipulating the levers of political power but believe in little other than their own career advancement.**

Without strong signals we hear white noise. The reason this occurs is clear. The obligatory obeisance to Paul Keating's achievements aside, Lindsay Tanner struggles to explain what Labor's message must be and how the party can reform its structure to suit a world where the majority of voters it needs are not the union members it sees as its core constituents.

Tanner recognised long ago that the party's structure had a fatal flaw. In 1990, he warned that MPs' obligation to electors trumped obedience to party conference and that the Labor elite had lost touch with a changing electorate, suggesting "most leaders have difficulty in understanding how the ordinary people they represent actually think".

The only solution for Labor was cadres (not a word he used) to connect with its base or, even then, bases: "The absence of a substantial party membership base bonded together by a common vision of society and its future is weakening seriously the long-term pursuit of Labor's broader objectives." Without that membership, "political oblivion beckons". While he was too pessimistic - Labor could win the next federal election - Lindsay Tanner was right to worry about the hollowing out of the party, with ample officers on staff but few volunteers in the ranks.

But how to attract new members? Tanner's 2006 solution was that Labor should remind the country it was the only political change agent - "the party of social enterprise, of intervention. We use politics and government to deliver positive change. The Liberals role is to resist this. We are the positive force, they are the negative."

It is here that Tanner stumbles. As with his colleagues, his broad vision is not designed for a party which now serves specific interest groups. And he knows it. While he did not mention the public sector unions, he acknowledged its core constituents

captured the party. Since 1996, he wrote, "Labor has continually offered support to disgruntled producer groups at the expense of consumers. Every time we do this we take another small chunk out of our economic credibility."

The result, he added this year, is the party exists to win elections and stay in power but stands for nothing in particular:

**Labor has become an electoral machine largely devoid of wider purpose. Labor governments still do good things but at the behest of random external forces, not any kind of inner calling. This delivers some electoral success, but it is inevitably fleeting, and meanwhile the political capital on which longer-term electoral competitiveness depends is slowly melting away.**

And this from one of the most competent cabinet ministers of the last 20 years. Inevitably, Lindsay Tanner comes over all optimistic, about how the party can recover by "reflecting the needs and interests and aspirations of Australians who work for a living" - presumably leaving the hereditary aristocrat vote to the conservatives.

## **FRANK SARTOR WARNS ABOUT THE INSIDER CULTURE**

But, if he is wrong, the fate of the last NSW Labor government, as chronicled by Frank Sartor, demonstrates what happens when a culture of being in power to protect party insiders takes over.<sup>xii</sup> For evidence of a patronage culture that an eighteenth century English aristocrat would recognise and what happens when the service providers shape policy Sartor says it all.

This is an angry book including a great deal of score settling. State Treasury officials, *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist Elizabeth Farrelly, developers and planning bureaucrats, plus ministers and backbenchers all cop serves, especially Eric Roozendaal. The outrage is exhausting and Sartor's determination to convince readers that just about everybody other than he is a dill reduces the overall impact of his chronicle of the decline and fall of the Carr-Iemma-Rees-Keneally government. Whether Sartor's critics will consider the treatment of his planning portfolio as comprehensive, it is certainly long.

But Sartor also offers a convincing warning of what happens when a party in government exists only to serve core constituents. Thus Sartor suggests, "The biggest encumbrances on the NSW Labor

government's ability to govern were the quadrennial enterprise bargaining negotiations, during which the unions insisted on pay rises that were simply not sustainable."

Sartor sets out the case against allowing officials who are interested in polling not policy, to run the show. It is worth quoting at length simply for the way it sets out at length opinions other Labor thinkers only offer in paraphrase:

**Some of these officials are from the same mould as modern union leaders – careerists for whom Labor values and ideals come second. They seek to win at all costs rather than holding to consistent positions over the long term in order to preserve the integrity of the party's policy platform and parliamentary representation. They too are driven by the motto of expediency, convenience and ambition. After a stint as party secretary, they organise themselves a safe seat in state or federal parliament and many expect to become ministers. This might be bearable if they brought some policy skills into parliament with them - but having never really cared about policy prior to entering parliament many of them don't.**

A comprehensive bucketing of the usual suspects to be sure but there is that phrase again, "Labor values".

Sartor declines to define them; rather he sets out how Labor should sell its services by demonstrating it will govern better than its opponents: "We need to appeal to the sensible left as the party of realistic and incremental reform and of social justice. ... We need to appeal to people of the sensible right – those who believe in a market economy but are open to voting for any party that offers competent government."

This is the William McKell model of political restraint and competent administration, what David Clune calls "pragmatism with purpose" and which kept Labor in state office from 1941 to 1965.<sup>xiii</sup>

The problem is what makes a winning formula for state politics does not apply federally. Ensuring the trains run on time, the hospital waiting lists are short-ish and students are literate when they leave school is a different challenge to managing the public purse, providing pensions, paying for the health system, securing the nation's defence, and expanding the economy so there is money to pay for everything. Canberra raises the revenue the states spend and it is a tougher task than service provision by many orders of magnitude.

To his credit, Sartor sets out structural specifics to reform Labor, giving the rank and file a role in electing officials and the state parliamentary leader, ending patronage appointments to the Legislative Council and ending union control of state conference. However, he is less than clear on what will motivate an empowered grass roots. The party should pursue, "principles of good government consistent with its own coherent values and ideals". Which are?

The problem with policy is that it involves choices. What do Labor values tell a treasurer who must choose between increasing health and welfare budgets and ensuring the private sector has the capital it requires? What guidance do they give an industrial relations minister being pressured to protect union officials' authority at the expense of productivity improvement?

Of course it can be done. The Prime Minister's struggle with the education unions to lift school standards shows how. But overall the party suffers from patron capture, its supporters' interests are either assumed to be synonymous with those of the nation or the problem this creates is underplayed, or ignored.

## TROY BRAMSTON IDENTIFIES LABOR VALUES

But not by sometime Labor staffer, now leader writer for *The Australian*, Troy Bramston. In *Looking for the light on the hill*, he codifies Labor values and sets out how to apply them in policies.<sup>xiv</sup>

This is a very serious book (nobody will ever accuse Bramston of frivolity), which merits reading by everybody concerned for Labor's future. Some of it will please party paladins. Bramston tackles the union link and makes a coherent, if not compelling case for closer links. But, the sheer hard graft he demands in defence of ideas which will give the conservatives a list of attack points will horrify everybody who still thinks state government style strategies will save Labor at a national level.

Instead of generalising about Labor values Bramston sets out what he thinks they are, how the party should apply them in federal politics and details the structure it needs to connect Labor traditions to the present.

The end result is both a Labor manifesto and a manual for winning elections and using office to advance party principles.

It is an impressive effort, instead of a reference to "values" Bramston not only lists seven, he explains their enduring role in the party and the role they can play in setting out what Labor stands for.

Some of them are hardly unique to Labor, the conservatives could claim that equality of opportunity belongs on their side of the partisan divide rather than among comrades with an antipathy to individualism. And in claiming to be the party of strong reforming leaders Bramston runs the old Labor line, that the left has all the best ideas and people with the courage of their convictions to implement them, even though its been 15 years plus since Paul Keating lost office.

But his overall point is sound; the party needs to present policies and fight elections on the basis of its identity as a whole rather than a bunch of market-tested, audience-specific messages and his book provides the party with a foundation to build on.

Bramston also argues Labor should empower and expand the base because giving rank and file members a vote in electing the leader will make Labor a party of policy ideas, "each new leader would have to reveal more of themselves and their ideas, open themselves up to greater scrutiny and have their campaigning skills tested." And he suggests increasing union links will build membership of the one party that exists, he claims, to serve working

people. It is the least convincing argument in the book. While he argues unions connect Labor to the community, Bramston ignores the NSW experience, where public sector unions saw the parliamentary party as creature not partner.

Overall there is a great deal of detail in Bramston's blueprint about how Labor can establish and explain what it stands for. The question is whether the power brokers now managing the party's decline will adopt any of it. Bramston is optimistic:

**The perception, and indeed the reality, is that a bunch of powerbrokers can sit around a table in a Chinese restaurant and decide who will enter parliament and who will not. Indeed, I have spoken to several of those who attend such meetings, and they, too recognise the need for it to stop.**

The record of Labor in NSW provides little evidence for this. For all the hard work underpinning Bramston's model, in the end, like all the other authors, his case depends is built on hope, rather than the party's recent record. Perhaps its way Labor loyalists are called true believers.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>x</sup> Maxine McKew, *Tales from the political trenches* (Melbourne, 2012)
- <sup>xi</sup> Lindsay Tanner, *Sideshow: dumbing down democracy* (Melbourne 2011,2012) and *Politics with purpose: occasional observations on public and private life* (Melbourne, 2012)
- <sup>xii</sup> Frank Sartor, *The fog on the hill: how NSW Labor lost its way* (Melbourne, 2012)
- <sup>xiii</sup> David Clune. "The life and times of William McKell," @ <http://mckellinstitute.org.au/about-3/the-life-and-times-of-bill-mckell> recovered on December 1
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### GERRY LEVY AM (1924-2012)

Gerry Levy, a much valued supporter of The Sydney Institute, died on 19 November 2012.

The next issue of *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* will publish an obituary.

# IS THE ABC'S POLITICAL CULTURE COMPATIBLE WITH ITS OWN CODE OF PRACTICE?

Don Aitkin

I heard Mark Scott, the Managing Director of the ABC, speak at the National Press Club in August 2011, and felt moved to write to him later about some of the matters I will deal with here. A couple of months later I received a nice letter from the head of ABC Audience & Consumer Affairs, thanking me for my interest, but passing over completely the matter of an ABC culture of the kind I suggest in what follows. I wrote back to point this out, and received another reply whose courtesy was greater than its argumentative power. After three readings I decided that I was being told that all organisations have a culture, but that in the case of the ABC this culture doesn't get in the way of the ABC's commitment to its principles. Maybe from inside a culture you have to think like this.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation is celebrating its 80th year, and it has been a great force for good in Australian society. Indeed, I would give it much of the credit for the quality and reach of Australian music of all kinds. But over the past few years I have become increasingly worried about what I have begun to call the 'political culture' of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. I don't mean Classic FM, which is the aural wallpaper of our house, or the ABC's choice in drama, sitcoms or thrillers, few of which I watch. What worries me is the political culture of news and current affairs, which seems to me somewhat blinkered.

Why am I worried? I think that there is a real mismatch between the Corporation's stated principles, as set out in its Code of Practice and Editorial Policies, and what I observe in its news broadcasts. Now if I were a member of the parliamentary Liberal Party that

might not be a surprising attitude for me to have. But I am not, and what worries me is that sooner or later those within the Coalition who share my perception will, when they are in government, be doing something about it. I do not want the best of the baby to go out with the bathwater.

I am no stranger to the ABC, or to television, radio and print. An early addiction to tennis, and the location of tennis courts across the road, solely, prevented my being an Argonaut. As an undergraduate student at University of New England in the 1950s (and president of its music society) I became a member of an ABC committee that was involved in bringing performers to country centres. In the 1970s, I was a member of the NSW advisory committee.

I was one of the commentators on the ABC's election night telecast in the 1960s, and have done *Notes on the News*, *News Review*, *Four Corners*, *Monday Conference*, *Lateline* — you name it. A good deal of my cultural shopping takes place in ABC shops. I am a strong supporter of the ABC, and have always been one. And since 1966 I have written columns or articles for every major Australian newspaper, on a weekly basis for about twenty years, and appeared on all the commercial TV channels as a commentator on Australian politics and society. I have some understanding of the media and its problems.

## THE MATTER OF VALUES

And yet, while I am glad that there is an ABC, and feel that Australia is better off for having it, I am conscious of what seems to me an ABC world-view, in which some issues and some values have more importance than others. Those who work for the ABC seem to share these values, by and large, and see them as natural, obvious, commonplace — the sorts of values, in their opinion, that any decent, educated, reasonable person should have, and the sorts of issues we should all be concerned about.

Irony aside, many of the values are mine, too, which makes this an awkward essay to write. They are the values, I would guess, of most academics in the humanities and the social sciences, of many of my friends, and of the generality of people with whom I mix. And it seems to me that, in recruiting staff, the ABC probably tends to prefer people who hold those values. Perhaps it believes that its real audience consists of those in Australia who share the same values, and who worry about the same issues. But truth and balance are important values too, especially for those whose business is providing news, and they ought to prevail. I do not think that they do.

For they are not the only values that Australians can possess. I would guess that most Australians are, in

comparison to the ABC and as attitude surveys suggest, rather more conservative, less internationalist, less sympathetic to the disadvantaged, less convinced about any human contribution to “climate change”, less worried about endangered species, more critical of handouts to indigenous people, less welcoming of boat people, and so on. Although their taxes also go to fund the ABC, their values may be more adequately expressed on commercial radio and television, which are the media to which they listen and, at the extreme end, by the talk-back radio hosts, with whom I have had my own encounters.

Since my wife and I routinely watch one and a half hours of television news each weeknight, I have been able to compare the treatment of the ABC and of Channel 9 over several years. Where the ABC is distinctive it is not so much in presenting equal time to the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition (by and large, everyone does that), but in what it decides is newsworthy, and then from what perspective the news story is given. Or, if you like, the ABC and Channel 9 offer different interpretations of what is “news” and why it is “newsy”.

SBS offers another perspective, in which international politics and events are much more pronounced than what happens in Australia. The box now offers many different perspectives, from all over the world. One can argue that the interests of Australians are well served that way. But if that is the case, in what sense does the ABC, as it purports to do, somehow offer balance, fairness and diversity of opinion, as though it were above the fray? What ought to be the guiding principles behind its selection and presentation of issues and events that are thought to be “news”?

## **NOW AND THEN**

This is the puzzle, and in coming to grips with it I find myself comparing now with the past. Has the ABC always been like this? Or have things changed over time? When I was a graduate student working on Australian politics, even before the indefatigable Henry Mayer had begun his dissection of the Australian media, it was common ground that there were “quality” newspapers and the rest — or, more accurately, there were newspapers of record and the others. The newspapers of record were those you went to for an accurate account of what had happened, with confidence that if something important had happened it would be in one of those newspapers rather than in the others.

Those papers were *The Age*, the *Argus* in Melbourne (now defunct, but important in its time), the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Australian* (once it had arrived in 1964), and the *Canberra Times*. The editorial position of

the newspapers — which party they recommended to their readers at election time, or which side they took in writing about the issues of the day — could not always be predicted. The ABC, to the extent it could be used in the writing of history, was perceived as a high-quality source. This was long before the Fairfax group possessed its charter of editorial independence, which came into being in the late 1980s.

Once I went to the UK, in 1964, I discovered another media world. Here newspapers were all “national” because of Britain’s small size and excellent communication system. While they were similarly judged for reliability or accuracy, they could also be arranged on a Left-Right continuum, with the *Daily Telegraph* supporting the Conservatives, the *Guardian* sympathetic to Labour, and the *Times* steering a middle course. They could be arranged vertically in terms of the presumed wealth of the readers, with the “quality” papers at the top. Again, the distinction between editorial opinion and news reporting was accepted to be important. In Britain, too, the BBC had a reputation for accuracy and comprehensiveness.

The media world has changed a great deal in the past fifty years. Television, free newspapers, the Internet, the iPad and its counterparts, and the apparent globalisation of the media have all made the financial position of established newspapers precarious, and at the time of writing both the Fairfax Media group and News Limited are dealing with unpalatable economic conditions by downsizing. It is entirely possible that in a few years’ time the daily print newspaper as we have known it will exist mostly in an electronic form.

In Australia, too, the newspapers have become rather more overtly partisan and party-political than they once were. I would argue that the Fairfax group can be seen as relatively sympathetic to the Greens and to Labor and its recent governments, as well as the issues, like climate change, gay marriage, and environmental problems, that have characterised urban Green and Labor supporters. The *Australian* and the other newspapers of News Ltd seem much of the time to be opposed to Labor, its government, and its principal issues.

## **THE CHANGING NATURE OF AUSTRALIAN POLITICS**

In Australian politics, too, there has been an important change. In the late 1950s a strong trade-union movement, enlisting more than half of all employees, backed the ALP, which faced a strong and confident coalition of the Liberal and Country parties. The essential difference between the two sides was the issue of communism, both in international relations and at home. That construction of our politics has gone, and so has a powerful union

movement: now only 18 per cent of employees belong to unions. So has the political party as the core of it all: in 2012 a minuscule proportion of Australians actually belongs to political parties, perhaps no more than 40,000 in a population of 22 million and more.

From time to time I see Australian politics as very much the battle of the Ins against the Outs. Or I am reminded of the change over time in football codes, where teams are simply professionals wearing particular colours, able to switch teams, or even codes, at the end of the season. In today's politics, I think, we see the jostling moves of a score or more of single-issue publics, which the parties try to cope with, buying time with this one, discussion with that one, favours with a third. My guess is that the single issues do exercise Australians far more than the parties themselves. And in each issue there is something to be said both against and for.

Within the body politic there have been other important changes. Australia ought to be one of the most confident and well-organised societies in the world. In the second half of the 20th Century we dealt well with national identity, immigration, economic growth, education, health and even the situation of the Aboriginal people — if you compare the Australia of 1950 with that of 2000. Much wealthier, better educated, well-travelled, innovative and creative, today's Australians ought to be confident about their future. But, on all the evidence, we are strangely anxious and apprehensive.

In the 1960s the mood was confident and forward-looking, despite the threats of nuclear holocaust, over-population, environmental disaster, and ordinary wars involving us, as in Vietnam. What has happened to the popular mood requires book-length treatment, and from time to time I feel the urge to supply one.

But perhaps we might just note that *Wikipedia* currently presents a list of environmental issues that contains 18 separate headings, five sub-heads, and 137 subjects. "As such they relate to the anthropogenic effects on the natural environment," explains the *Wikipedia* editor. The core of the new angst, around which a kind of religion has developed, is the notion that human beings are responsible for despoiling the natural world, and we must stop doing it. Now.

## THE ABC AND ENVIRONMENTAL ANGST

And that long intermission brings me back to the ABC. To me the ABC seems committed to the view that anthropogenic global warming (AGW, now transmuted into "climate change") is a real and present threat to humanity. Such a position, if I am right that it exists, is at odds with its own Editorial Policies and Code of Practice (both excellent documents, and

similar in their content). Among other things they state that "Aiming to equip audiences to make up their own minds is consistent with the public service character of the ABC" — and who could disagree? Accordingly, "The ABC has a statutory duty to ensure that the gathering and presentation of news and information is impartial according to the recognised standards of objective journalism".

In my judgment, neither of those admirable goals has been followed in this matter. Kevin Rudd, when prime minister, called AGW the greatest moral challenge of our time. And Labor has produced an extraordinary "carbon tax" without precedent in Australian politics, as well as serving (perhaps along with "the boats") as the key matter currently separating the Government and the Opposition. So it is not a trivial concern, the parties disagree, and audiences might reasonably expect an impartial treatment of it. This is not, in my judgment, what they get.

I should say that I cannot complain about ABC bias at a personal level. Robyn Williams offered me two successive programs on the *Science Show* to summarise a paper I had given to the Australian Planning Institute on global warming, broadcasts that provided a flow of hostile comment to me from ABC listeners. But in general I feel able to say that the tone of the ABC's treatment of global warming is not simply that it follows the orthodoxy, but that it does so quite uncritically.

The orthodoxy is the position of the current Australian Government, of the executive of the Australian Academy of Science, of the United Nations, its agencies and its spokespeople, of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and of the Fairfax Media Group of newspapers. It is hard to row against the tide. But the science is not at all settled: it is most likely that the planet has been warming in irregular ways for the past century and a half, but it is by no means certain that human activities have been the major cause of the warming, let alone that the warming is likely to be catastrophic for humanity.

To make the point again, the ABC is supposed to be impartial, and to be equipping us to make up our own minds. Orthodoxies are there to be challenged, for that is the way human knowledge advances. And we are not in a position to make up our minds unless we have available good knowledge from all perspectives.

I cannot give a day-by-day account of examples, and am not equipped to do so. What sticks in my mind are three themes.

## GLOOM

The first is the unrelieved gloom of every story about the environment, though any reasonably well-informed

person could provide a few, especially about developed societies like our own. Whether or not the seas are rising in an unprecedented way depends on which article you read, and which scientists you think are authoritative. My memory may be faulty, but I cannot recall the ABC's telling any good news stories about rising sea-levels.

More generally, more trees are being planted, the Barrier Reef seems to be doing well though from the media perspective it is always under threat, conservation farming is increasing, national parks are growing in number, waste disposal is being done more carefully, and so on. The ABC presents news stories about "climate change" that are always dour. I cannot think of one in which the take-home message is "Hey! aren't we doing well!" Rather, the theme is usually that things are even worse than we feared.

## ERRORS

A second is the failure to correct stories when they are clearly wrong. I think the ABC has a duty of care here, and indeed its Code of Practice includes a commitment to "correct or clarify ... significant material errors ... or information that is likely to significantly and materially mislead". While I was writing this essay the ABC reported with some fanfare the *anticipated* publication of an article by Australian scientists (Joelle Gergis et al. 2012) that purported to show unprecedented warming in the Southern Hemisphere, a result heralding that the IPCC was right, and that AGW was indeed a major problem for the world. The paper was said to be Australia's contribution to the 5th Assessment Report of the IPCC, and its public announcement just met the closing date for published work that could be considered in that report. (Any critiques or rebuttals of the paper would *not* be published in time to be considered.)

A good investigative journalist might have approached the story with some caution, remembering that any international meeting about the environment (Rio + 20 was about to start) seemed to be preceded by a flurry of publications showing that things environmental had reached crisis-point. He or she might have wondered how good this paper really was. In any case, it was quickly and abruptly withdrawn from the journal that had agreed to publish it: an experienced sceptic had shown within a day or two that the methodology was badly flawed and the results meaningless.

Did the ABC report the withdrawal of the paper? No. It only placed a correction notice on its Online news website after the event. To my perhaps jaundiced eye, the correction notice seemed to imply that the errors were minor and that the paper would be published again. Mebbe so, mebbe so not, as Mandrake's giant Nubian slave used to say. But in my opinion ABC

audiences had been misled in this example: they were not told that news of a week before about unprecedented warming appeared to have been based on flawed science.

A couple of years ago the ABC reported (following the *Canberra Times*) that ANU climate scientists had received "death threats" and had to be moved to a secure building. A doubting sceptic pursued this matter through FOI, and discovered in May this year that none of these were "death threats", and were better described as the sort of abuse that anyone who writes in controversial areas expects.

Anyone reading the subsequent accounts of the death-threat issue would have concluded that the original story was a beat-up, probably concocted by one or more of the scientists concerned, and aided by the university itself. The university then stated that it had not kept the emails or made records of the threats said to have been contained in phone calls. Nor had it referred the matters to the police.

What did the ABC do about this somewhat embarrassing turnaround? As it happens, a couple of disgruntled members of the ABC audience made formal complaints about the inaccurate, misleading and biased treatment of this story, complaints that were later upheld internally. The ABC's explanation of what happened then concluded, "The headline and two other lines in the story were amended to make that clear, and an Editor's Note was added". When I complained about it myself I received a reply that went, in part, "ABC News is of the view that the publicly available evidence neither proves the existence of death threats nor proves a fabrication." In my opinion, the ABC here was most reluctant to abandon the notion of death threats, or to make a news story about the university's actions, which were bizarre, to say the least.

## PC

The third theme is what I would call a general political correctness, revealing itself in a systematic preference for "ought" implying "is". A regular ABC listener/viewer will learn that environmentalists are always virtuous. If they do bizarre things, as when James Hansen of the Goddard Institute of Space Science (which produces one of the temperature data sets important to AGW discussions) referred to trainloads of coal as "death trains" these are rarely reported. Species always seem to be in danger of extinction. Women are always coming up against patriarchy, glass ceilings or structural barriers. Outside the business news domain, corporations always seem to be acting badly. Rich people are likely to be mean. Health and education seem to be in a disastrous situation, and the fault is plainly that of

governments. The United Nations is a good thing, and international organisations like Greenpeace are plucky and well-intentioned. "Boat people" are always "asylum seekers", which suggests a political reason for their emigration, though on the face of it they simply have more money than those in refugee camps around the world. Scientists who are sceptical of the AGW scare, like Jennifer Marohassy, are made the subject of what seem to me tendentious personal attacks, in this occasion on "Media Watch". (She had argued that Lake Alexandrina, at the end of the Murray River, had been subject both to fresh and salt water episodes prior to the arrival of European settlers and the building of weirs and barrages — on the face of it a completely plausible hypothesis, though one counter to the current orthodoxy.) There is an awful predictability about the tone of ABC News in these domains.

So I worry. If someone like me can come to these views over a period of years, what do others less sympathetic to the ABC think?

It is always hard to see outside a box if you are inside one. But it seems to me that the ABC at the Board level needs to do its own worrying about the culture. Ron Brunton wrote a fine essay in this journal (Issue 33, 2008) on his experiences as a Board member, concluding that the Board was seduced by management to the point where it might not even have been aware of important issues facing the organisation. If he is right, and I think he is, then this won't be at all easy.

The days of assuming that the ABC sits neutrally above the political fray, disarmingly balanced, diverse and impartial, are over.

The question for the Board is difficult to answer, but simple to state. If the ABC is to follow its own principles, then it needs to become much more impartial in its treatment of events and people. Or, if the culture is too strong to change, then the Board needs to rewrite its Code of Practice and Editorial Policies so that they match what the ABC actually does. Ron Brunton's essay gives me no great hope that the answer will be swift.

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# PEACE IN OUR TIME - APPEASEMENT REVISITED

Anne Henderson

Appeasement – the word made infamous during the late 1930s – is back in the news. Iran's anti-Israel rhetoric has hardened both within Iran and even at the United Nations itself. While not naming Israel or the USA, in a speech to the UN on Monday 24 September, Iranian President Mahmoud Amahdinejad condemned the Jewish state as a "fake regime" and made clear Iran's belief the Jewish people had no claims to authentic existence in Palestine.

While Iran inches closer to obtaining a nuclear weapon, and as US support for Israel over confronting Iran softens under President Obama, the word appeasement has crept back to haunt the news. And, once again, leaders who soften their approach to encroaching dictators are being accused of "appeasement".

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is now publicly pushing President Obama to set "red lines" beyond which, if Iran moves, the US will sanction a military response. President Obama refuses to publicly endorse this, preferring to continue engaging in diplomacy and enforcing certain sanctions. How close to the world of 1938 have we come?

## 1938 RE-VISITED

By 1938, Britain, France and the USA realised any fragile global peace was fracturing against the encroachments of a rearming and threatening Germany led by Adolf Hitler and his Nazi regime. The peace after World War I had been chiselled from a ravaged Europe and defeated Germany in 1918, and the Treaty of Versailles the following year. The Treaty terms overly penalised Germany but made a first step in global policing by the Western allies.

The world of 1938 operated under the watchful eyes of the League of Nations, a peace body increasingly finding its efforts to preserve relations between many of its members, and non-League nations like Germany, to be less and less effective. In 1933, Hitler had taken Germany out of the League, in 1936 he

remilitarised the Rhineland and in 1938 had annexed Austria; while, under Mussolini, in 1935 League member Italy had invaded and acquired Abyssinia, a member of the League. In addition, Germany's massive rearmament after 1934 was against all terms of its peace settlement under the agreement at Versailles. But the League remained powerless to stop any of this.

It was also a world reminded, in graphic ways, of the outcomes of war - thousands of maimed husbands and fathers had returned from battlefields after 1918 while tens of thousands did not return, so that acres of white crosses had steadily filled new military graveyards across northern France and Belgium. Increasingly, these fields of white and green were visited by the families of the fallen - so many young men sent to fight from as far away as Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

In 1938, Hitler made obvious his intention to take over the majority German-speaking Sudetenland within the Czechoslovakian borders. From March 1938 until the Munich Agreement on 29 September, Britain and France sought to settle a crisis in a region most of their citizens had barely heard of. With Mussolini as go-between, the Czechs were finally sold out in the compromises reached. No Czech representative took part in the talks that decided the Munich Agreement. This agreement allowed German troops within weeks to occupy the Sudetenland. Appeasement or "peace in our time" had reached its zenith.

Looked at in hindsight, and taking place before the destruction, killings and incarcerations of German and Austrian Jewish citizens and communities during Kristallnacht on 9-10 November 1938, the Munich Agreement was not surprising. The overwhelming impulse of the leaders in the UK, France, the US and the British dominions was to work for negotiated settlements between disputing nations, in the potential shadow of another global Armageddon.

World reaction to Iranian extremism today is much the same. The US and President Obama pull back from the urgency felt by Israeli leaders, even if pledging that the US will not let Iran develop a nuclear weapon. In Israel itself, reports say the nation is divided over the danger Iran presents, echoing many well informed Britons, even in 1939, who could not believe that Germany would actually attack the UK.

From our distance in time, the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) echoes today's civil war in Syria. War there rages, leaders of the free world discuss options, opposition fighters take up arms and draw in supporters from far and near, news rooms of the

world media, daily, report catastrophes and commentators speculate on the possible outcomes. Around the globe, countries and citizens register concern, some predict a major consequence but all wish for an end to the hostilities with the least involvement of outside nations.

## **ALEXANDER CADOGAN ON BRITAIN'S CHOICES IN 1938**

The UK Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs (1938-1946) Alexander Cadogan was an exemplary civil servant. And he kept meticulous diaries of his years in the service during World War II and the year that led up to it. These diaries have been published - edited by historian David Dilks - as *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan 1938-1945* (Cassell London 1971). Working closely with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Lord Halifax (1938-40), Cadogan had an acute sense of the diplomatic jungle and foreign policy settings for the UK around the outbreak of World War II in September 1939.

Post Munich, in mid October 1938, Cadogan scripted a review of the Sudeten crisis and made an assessment of what he saw as foreign policy priorities for the United Kingdom in the light of continental Europe being dominated by Nazi and fascist regimes alongside the (then) sleeping bear approach of the Soviet Union.

Cadogan admitted, frankly, that the UK and France together could barely match Germany's military capacity. He noted also that Britain had interests (and responsibilities) across the globe - in China (Far East) and with its vast Dominions - as he put it, "concentrated mainly in the hands of a not very numerous body of British individuals and concerns". Assuming that the political situation in Europe would not worsen greatly, that October he opined:

**... we must, so long as these conditions last, give up any idea of policing Europe such as has come down to us from Versailles and the Covenant of the League. We simply cannot protect our own interests all over the world and at the same time claim a preponderant voice in the ordering of affairs in continental Europe.**

**...We must cut our losses in central and eastern Europe - let Germany, if she can, find there her "lebensraum", and establish herself, if she can, as a powerful economic unit ...**

**... we are faced at the other side of the world, with a situation not unlike the one that confronts us here ... And the problem, fundamentally is the same, are we to fight**

### Japan now, and prevent her possible accession of strength, or wait for a possible war later.

Most telling in the years that Hitler consolidated his strength as German leader was the failure of Western democracies to “read” Hitler. As the leader of the pack at the time, Britain was no different from any.

## COMPREHENDING HITLER

Ian Kershaw comments in *Making Friends with Hitler – Lord Londonderry and Britain’s Road to War*, that it is “easy to see in retrospect how misguided some of the opinion was ... [but] less easy at the time to grasp the enormity of what Hitler meant”. This misreading of Hitler in his first years as chancellor, concludes Kershaw – in spite of comprehensive reports from the British Embassy in Berlin – meant the Nazi regime could use its “initial position of international vulnerability and isolation to forge one of formidable strength”.

The comments of Sir Maurice Hankey, Secretary to the UK Cabinet, in October 1933 after Hitler had taken Germany out of the League of Nations, offer insight into the difficulties of comprehension among many leading figures. Could this man really be as bad as his views in *Mein Kampf*? As Hankey put it: “Are we still dealing with the Hitler of *Mein Kampf* ... Or is it a new Hitler, who has discovered the burden of responsible office, and wants to extricate himself, like many an earlier tyrant, from the commitments of his irresponsible days?”

Such sentiment and its tendency to evaluate Germany’s Nazi leader in similar terms to dictators previously known could not envisage the horrific reality that would be the Reich’s 1940s Europe. As Hitler advanced with his claims for German expansion, while rearming rapidly, in the late 1930s Western leaders fell back on this lack of imagination as to possible outcomes.

By the time Cadogan was writing his October 1938 review of foreign policy realities for the UK, maintaining peace for Britain was the overriding concern in Whitehall. As Cadogan’s review suggests, the hope was that Hitler might find his “red line” somewhere in continental Europe, and hopefully in a way that would not involve the UK.

## APPEASEMENT FALTERS

In March 1939, Hitler invaded and took control of Czechoslovakia; British PM Neville Chamberlain - who only five months before had been hailed for delivering peace with Hitler at Munich - spoke of the invasion as “an attempt to dominate the world by

force”. Soon after, the UK committed itself to standing by Poland, Greece and Rumania should they be threatened by Germany. And sped up its rearmament program. But, even as Britain moved inevitably to such commitments, Cadogan wrote in his diary on 20 March how he had to steel one of Chamberlain’s letters to Mussolini lest it look “too much like asking for another Munich”.

A negotiated settlement with Hitler, to prevent another European war, continued to occupy the minds of key players at Whitehall right up to the declaration of war with Germany in September 1939. War remained the ultimate evil. Historian David Dilkes notes that while the British, from March to August, turned their attention to coaxing Russia on to their side (and failed), in July Sir Horace Wilson, chief industrial adviser to the UK government and Conservative MP Robert Hudson had met with Goering’s official Wohltat to offer Germany a large British loan if Germany would “mend its ways”.

Whitehall’s continued search for ways to broker a peace settlement with Hitler, months after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, led some in the Conservative Party to worry that Britain’s promise to stand by Poland would be reneged. The July negotiations over economic co-operation and the offer of massive loans for German industry caused genuine concern among a dissident group of Conservative MPs, among whom were Winston Churchill and a young Harold MacMillan. As Lynne Olson puts it in *Troublesome Young Men*:

**[Horace] Wilson made clear that the conclusion of such an Anglo-German entente would, in view of the British government, invalidate Britain’s guarantee of Poland. The proposed agreement, however, failed to get very far. ... Yet the aborted discussions did have one major result: they hardened Hitler’s belief that Chamberlain had no intention of going to war over Poland.**

## THE ONSET OF HOSTILITIES

War came, whatever the many intricate moves of government officials in Britain, France, Germany and Russia. On 23 August, Germany’s principal ideological opponent – the Soviet Union – signed the Ribbentrop-Molotov Non-aggression Pact ensuring Germany an easy route to the conquest of Poland.

By 1 September, German bombs were raining down on Polish cities, towns and citizens in the open were being machine gunned from low flying aircraft. But, after 24 hours, Britain was still hovering, waiting it

seemed for some catalyst to bring about the PM's ultimatum. Appeals from Warsaw appeared to be falling on deaf ears. Chamberlain was awaiting agreement from the French. Cadogan's diaries chart the edgy lack of momentum at Number 10, eventually writing for 3 September:

**Drove in car to F[oreign] O[ffice] about 9.30. No news. Dahlerus rang up 10.50 to say German reply on its way. Only hope was to ask Goering to fly over. I said "Rats". I went over with H[alifax] at 11 to PM. 11.10 still no news. PM due to broadcast at 11.15. 11.12 definite message from Berlin that no reply received so PM let fly at 11.15. Very good.**

And so, in that matter-of-fact way, Cadogan recorded one of the most momentous moments in twentieth century history. Appeasement had failed. At the Foreign Office and Number 10, tensions were at a great height. Although it appears in the diary as similar to just another short step on a chequered itinerary of meetings and public statements. In the days that followed, the public were roused to a war footing – streets blacked out, bomb shelters tested.

Yet, the routines of many months were not easily given up. War still seemed very much in a "foreign field" and perhaps negotiation could be revived. On 7 October, Cadogan wrote in his diary: "the line, according to me, is to say frankly (and PM hesitates to say this) that *we won't make peace with Hitler*. that is my *war aim* – not peace aim".

Sentiment favouring a negotiated settlement continued to affect decisions even after the declaration of war. And then, on 14 October, came news of the sinking of the *Royal Oak* by a German U-boat at Scapa Flow.

## A NEW APPEASEMENT DEBATE

Eighty years and more into the future, the word appeasement is being used again. Obviously, the details of the situation differ hugely. Iran confronts Israel, mouthing words of hate and belief that Israelis should be driven from the region. Unlike Hitler, Iran is not planning to invade its neighbours. Just threaten one of them with extinction.

The USA, Israel's strong supporter and ally, is not directly threatened by bombs from Iran. The bomb shelters are not multiplying in US cities as they did in UK cities from the end of 1938. And yet there are parallels. Negotiation – as with appeasement – is the preferred option for most contenders in this state of brinkmanship. Even Netanyahu in Israel would rather not have to take out Iranian nuclear sites by force.

As commentators and politicians get word of Iran's growing development of a nuclear weapon, avoidance of crunch time is the reaction. On 14 September, President Obama said that there would be no red lines because "there remains time and space for diplomacy". On 24 September, Obama told *Sixty Minutes* on CBS that when it came to national security decisions "any pressure that I feel is simply to do what's right for the American people. And I am going to block out any noise that's out there."

The bluff and counter bluff have continued for years – so long as to lull many in the region into a sense that it will never come to war. A war that could be swift and devastating on all counts. That alone is a caution for all players. But the stakes are high and the tensions real. Something could give at any point. Iran, not unlike Germany decades before, senses that its opponents are not really willing to strike. And its leaders and mullahs sound off that Israel would not risk extinction to end Iran's nuclear program.

But realists like former US Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk have their misgivings. Indyk cautioned recently that a US strike against Iran is possibly just six months away. At a recent roundtable of foreign policy experts in the US, Indyk said:

**There is still time, perhaps six months, even by Prime Minister Netanyahu's own time table, to try to see if a negotiated settlement can be worked out. I'm pessimistic about that. If that doesn't work out – and we need to make every effort, exhaust every chance that it does work – then I'm afraid that 2013 is going to be a year in which we're going to have a military confrontation with Iran.**

As with the negotiators of 1938, sometimes talk and deals work, and sometimes the players are such that there can be no workable deal. The agreement with Hitler in 1938 at Munich only gained a little time; within a year, England had declared it was at war with Germany. Can more than eight decades of learning how to play the diplomatic balancing act make appeasement work? Who knows?

But, as in 1938-39, there is no doubt that those at the top today have similar aspirations to those leaders in Western Europe in 1938-39 – peace, and in our time.

*Anne Henderson is the Deputy Director of The Sydney Institute*



# FRANK MOUNT, BOB SANTAMARIA AND ASIA IN THE 1960S AND 1970S

On 10 July 2012, at Melbourne's Celtic Club, Gerard Henderson launched Frank Mount's *Wrestling With Asia: A Memoir* (Connor Court Publishing, 2012, \$35). Frank Mount covered the Vietnam War and South East Asia for four decades and was executive secretary of the Pacific Institute. His book gives a unique account of B.A. Santamaria's political involvement in South East Asia in the 1960s and 1970s.

When Frank Mount asked me to launch his *Wrestling with Asia: A Memoir*, I could not say no. After all, I have known Frank Mount for over 40 years. As he writes in his memoirs, Frank was the founding president of the Melbourne University Democratic Labor Party Club – and held that position from 1962 to 1965.

I was his successor – and, as such, the second (and, I think, final) DLP Club president. In the 1960s the Club had a lot of talent. I still have a little list of the membership – realising that, if released, it might cause some surprises concerning some now prominent Australians. By around the late 1960s, however, Bob Santamaria's colleagues at the National Civic Council had set up their own club on campus. As Frank hints in his book, we were perhaps too independent minded for B.A. Santamaria – or BAS, as some of us called him.

So Frank and I had the Melbourne University DLP Club in common. Also, we had the same employer (the National Civic Council) for a brief time – where I worked part-time for BAS in 1970 and 1971.

There is another similarity of sorts – which I need to describe carefully. When I wrote the first draft of this speech, I commented that Frank and I had been married to the same woman for 40 years. This was intended as a comment on longevity – not bigamy. In fact, we have been married to different women for

four decades. Appropriately, the book is dedicated to Eileen Mount (nee Gleeson) and their children Patrick and Lucy.

## B.A. SANTAMARIA, PINS ON A MAP AND STRATEGY

Dearly Beloved Brethren. My text for this evening's service is taken from Page 288 of "The Book of Mount" – where it is written that, had it come to pass, something or other "would have changed the whole strategic situation in Asia".

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Bob Santamaria was wont to illustrate his talks on Asia by means of a large portable map of the region, mounted on wood, on which was placed various coloured pins. Red for communist forces, of course. But also blue, yellow, green, black and white.

On one occasion, when engaged in our occasional irreverent discussions about BAS, Frank remarked to me: "If Bob ever dropped his map, and the pins fell out and were replaced incorrectly, it could change the whole strategic situation in Asia". I thought that this was quite funny and decided to use Frank's joke sometime in the future – with or without acknowledgement.

Soon after, I bumped into Santamaria in the car park at the back of what was then called Belloc House – in Sackville Street, Kew. BAS was about to come in the back-door to address an NCC meeting in the front room. In those days, I did not feel comfortable calling BAS "Bob" – and I declined to call him "Mr Santamaria". So, using no term of address, I fronted up to BAS and, in duly irreverent tone, said: "Be careful. If you drop that map, and the pins are replaced incorrectly, it could change the whole strategic situation in Asia". Santamaria did not respond. Clearly, he was not amused.

I followed BAS up the hall at Belloc House and sat down around the conference table – as we did. Santamaria gave the first talk – as he did. This time, however, BAS decided to lead off with some humour – and told the assembled delegates words to this effect:

**I met Gerard Henderson in the car park out at the back a couple of minutes ago, when I was carrying this map in here. I told Gerard that, if I dropped my map and the pins fell out and were replaced incorrectly, the whole strategic situation in Asia could change.**

Needless to say, Santa's Movement friends fell about laughing. So I learnt from an early age that humour – like beauty – is very much in the eye of the beholder.

## THE TALENTED – BUT NOT SAINTLY – MR SANTAMARIA

I regard myself as short. And Frank is shorter than me. He's also smaller. I'm sure that Frank's slight build – along with his determination and courage – helped him escape the dreadful hotel fire in Bangkok in March 1971, scaling down a drainpipe clad only in his "shorty pyjamas". Frank's escape from the fire, in which scores died, was photographed and published on the front page of *The Bangkok World* over the caption "The Human Fly".

So it comes as some surprise to read in the inaugural paragraph of "The Book of Mount" that the author regarded himself as "James Bond before he was thought of". Even though Frank reveals that he ran agents in the communist Viet Cong during the Vietnam War, I have never looked at him and seen James Bond. James Bond's jockey perhaps – but not the real thing.

Frank Mount worked with BAS for over a decade – during the 1960s and up to the mid 1970s when, after the fall of Saigon, Santamaria lost some of his interest in the region. The final chapter of the book is titled "Why I Departed Company with Santamaria". What's valuable about these memoirs is that they give a balanced view of the founder of the Catholic Social Studies Movement (The Movement) around 1940 – which became the National Civic Council – around the mid-1950s.

These days it's becoming a bit of a fad to cast Santamaria as an embodiment of The Fall. Such accounts can be readily found in the work of such commentators as Bruce Duncan, the late Jim Griffin, Paul Ormonde, even Brenda Niall.

I recently came across an outline – so far unaccepted – for a documentary by film maker Pat Laughren who argued that Santamaria was "as threatened by milk bars, hire-purchase, sex and secularism as by the Reds". Can you bear it? The man did have eight children, after all, and – in olden times at least – there was a causal relationship between such outcomes and sex.

Frank Mount describes Santamaria as one of "the worst organised people" he ever met and maintains that "he was not always a man of his word". In short, the author declares that he "never remotely thought at the time" in his "long association with Bob" that he was "engaging with a saint". I would say "amen" to that.

As to Frank. Well, over four decades I have observed behaviour which – in time and in another life – might warrant canonisation. For this reason, I recommend that you all purchase a copy of "The Book of Mount" and get the author to sign it. Then register it with your

family assets. Who knows? In time, a signed copy of Frank's memoirs might become a third-class relic.

Whilst not regarding BAS as a suitable candidate for sainthood, Frank describes him as "a brilliant writer and the best television commentator of his time". Quite so. He also writes:

**...it can be fairly said that Bob Santamaria in promoting his Pacific Community or Asian Pacific Community concept in the early sixties and following it through politically, now stands as one of the great international strategic visionaries in Australian history.**

In the final paragraph of his memoirs, Frank Mount writes of the difficulties experienced in dealing with Santamaria by such NCC operatives as Norm Lauritz and Gerald Mercer and by most DLP senators along with Brian Harradine. Earlier, Frank gives his take on the National Civic Council split which commenced in 1978 and concluded in 1982 – about the length of the Great War.

This issue is well covered in Patrick Morgan's excellent collection of B.A. Santamaria's letters and documents which are published by Melbourne University press and the State Library of Victoria. Nevertheless, *Wrestling with Asia* concludes with the following sentence:

**...at various times of his career Bob [Santamaria], while a complex man, was a truly great and courageous politician and churchman who, to say the least, had a wide and lasting influence and major achievements to his name. For me, the Pacific Institute, his concept of the Pacific Community and what it led to were among the greatest. The good memories linger.**

It is sometimes forgotten that the first parliamentary political party to call for the end of the White Australia Policy was the Democratic Labor Party. Earlier this position had been advocated by Archbishop Daniel Mannix and B.A. Santamaria.

## NAMING ANTI-COMMUNIST NAMES

In his time in Australia in particular, and Asia in general, Frank Mount got to know many people. His memoirs contain references to such significant Australian characters as Frank McManus, Jim McAuley, Frank Knopfmacher, Fr Bill Smith S.J., Geoffrey Fairbairn, Sam Benson, Jack Kane, Colin Clark, Heinz Arndt, John Maynes, Terry Tobin, Peter Frankel, Ted Madden, Patrick Morgan, Brian Buckley, Patrick O'Brien, Vincent Buckley, Ray Evans, Laurie Short, Peter Samuel, Bob Browning,

John Barich, Dick Hughes, Sib Ray, Denis Warner, Owen Harries, John Traill, William McMahon, Malcolm Fraser, Harold Holt and more.

There are also valuable insights into Indonesians Benny Moerdani, Marie Pangestu and the Dutch-born Fr Joop Beek, along with Hong Kong based Jesuit Laszlo La Dany (who was right about communist China under Mao's dictatorship when most Western academics were hopelessly wrong) and the Burmese John Myint, whom Frank helped obtain refuge in Australia.

Frank's memoirs also contain reflections on the Australian warrior Ted Serong and the Australian journalist Kate Webb.

## ON JOHN HORWOOD'S SANDALS - AND KATE WEBB

One of the plus-points of *Wrestling with Asia*, which has been well produced by Anthony Cappello at Connor Court, is that it contains some great illustrations – including one of the sassy Kate Webb in South Vietnam circa 1969. There is also a fetching photo of Frank, rifle in hand, inspecting a South Vietnamese outpost in 1967. He's standing next to John Horwood – who is also carrying a rifle while wearing, wait for it, sandals.

Reading about Frank's memories of the gorgeous Ms Webb, I became somewhat disoriented. Lest such a fate befall me tonight, I quote below from my notes taken when reading "The Book of Mount", in a stream of unconsciousness.

- **Page 19.** There's a reference to Kate Webb, whom Frank met in his student days at Melbourne University.

- **Page 96.** There's a reference to "lovely Kate Webb" whom he met in Saigon. Frank refers to her "wry grin" as she says "Hello' in that incredibly low and light husky, sexy voice of hers". Frank writes "she just knocked my socks off". It seems that the rest of the author's attire remained *in situ*. Frank declares that, on first meeting Kate Webb he "had immediately fallen in love" and adds:

**Many other men had already done so and would continue to do so, for apart from her beauty, she was a very quiet, self-effacing and seemingly vulnerable girl at risk in a wild world and therefore in need of masculine protection.**

A lady in need of some James Bond case management, it seems. Except that, in his next sentence, Frank says that nothing could have been further from the truth. So, perhaps, a potential conqueror of The Human Fly.

- **Page 164.** In Saigon now. Kate Webb again slides in behind Lucky Frank, looks into Lucky Frank's eyes and says "Hello", "so softly, huskily and innocently". According to Lucky Frank, "that was that".

- **Page 176.** Kate's been in touch again – this time by phone. Frank reflects: "Is she in love with me?" Next morning in Saigon he drinks with the "jeans-clad Kate early into the afternoon".

- **Page 181.** It's that Kate again – in Saigon, again. She squeezes Frank's arm and whispers: "You're a backroom macro-manipulator, Frank". Frank recalls: "I shrugged and said, 'Not really'. But, he adds "in hindsight she was probably right." Another James Bond moment, it seems.

- **Page 321. Part Two** – the "Addenda, Vignettes and Anecdotes" section. Frank returns to a familiar topic. He's in Phnom Penh with BAS and Fr Bill Smith. Lucky Frank meets Kate Webb at a hotel swimming pool. She soon starts flirting with him. But, thank God, Fr Smith is on hand and advises, coldly: "She'd make a bad marriage risk." Frank reveals that he and Kate "had come to a similar conclusion many moons before".

- **Back to the main text at Page 201.** Frank reports that, in May 1971, he "had married Eileen Gleeson" – to whom he had been introduced by John Myint in the lounge of the Windsor Hotel.

Enough said.

## TED SERONG, PAUL HAM AND THE ABC

And then there is Brigadier Ted Serong, who led the Australian Army Training Team which went to South Vietnam in 1962. Serong later advised the United States Military Commander in Vietnam and served as an advisor to the CIA on counter-insurgency. Anne Blair covers Serong's career in her fine book *To the Bitter End: Ted Serong in Vietnam*. Serong and Santamaria both attended St Kevin's – and were close in their adult years.

Again, Frank Mount's assessment of Ted Serong – with whom he declares having had a love/hate relationship – is balanced. Frank refers to Serong's "insufferable arrogance" and describes him as a person who could be "rude and dismissive towards even his best friends and often publicly". However, he writes that Serong "was the greatest practitioner of counter-guerrilla insurgency the world has ever seen".

The journalist Paul Ham – who is quoted in these memoirs – was fair to Serong in his book *Vietnam: The Australian War* (HarperCollins, 2007). However, Ham adopted a markedly different approach in his ABC TV documentary *All The Way* – which he presented and co-wrote with one-time ABC staffer Anne Delaney.

*All The Way* was very much an ABC production where everyone agrees with everyone else and a fine, leftist, ideological time is had by all. It is a matter of record that not one person who supports the Australian commitment in Vietnam was allowed a voice on the program.

*All The Way* presented Ted Serong as virtually a war criminal due to the fact that, for a brief period, he headed Operation Phoenix in South Vietnam. Operation Phoenix was not an afternoon tea party. But this was a war fought against brutal North Vietnam Army and Viet Cong forces. As *Wrestling with Asia* documents, Operation Phoenix inflicted heavy casualties on communist forces.

Paul Ham's ABC TV documentary is replete with the anti-Catholic sectarianism, which is so common these days on the public broadcaster.

One example illustrates the point. In his ABC documentary, Ham presented Ngo Dinh Diem, South Vietnam's president between 1954 and 1963, as a corrupt Catholic who persecuted Buddhists. However, in his book, Ham wrote that Diem "had not violently oppressed the Buddhist faith". This suggests that Ham re-assessed Diem to please the mindset of the taxpayer funded Screen Australia and the ABC.

### THE 1963 COUP AGAINST DIEM AND THE MISTAKES OF AVERELL HARRIMAN & ROBERT MCNAMARA

As Frank Mount explains, the US decision to support the 1963 coup against Diem had disastrous consequences. He is also critical of the way in which the US fought the war, while praising the contribution of the Australian Defence Force. Frank, justifiably, is very critical of such American officials as Averell Harriman and the appalling Robert McNamara. And he expresses his anger at the inability of senior Coalition politicians during the Menzies, Holt, Gorton and McMahon governments to adequately defend Australia's Vietnam commitment. The job was left to such organisations as the NCC, Peace with Freedom, the Defend Australia Committee, even the DLP Club at both Melbourne and Monash universities.

Frank still supports the anti-communist cause in Vietnam – as I do. You will not find much backing for this position in Melbourne at the inner-city ABC studio in Southbank or at *The Age* in the CBD. But you will if you talk to the Vietnamese Australians in such suburbs as Dandenong, Kensington and Springvale.

*Wrestling with Asia* contains a photograph of Frank's friend Ngo Khac Tinh who spent 12 years in solitary confinement following the so-called "liberation" of South Vietnam by communist North Vietnam.

## THE FALL OF SAIGON

I remember one evening over dinner in early 1975 at our home in Kew. Anne and I were hosts and Eileen and Frank Mount along with Carol and John McConnell the guests. Following my pessimistic prediction that Saigon would soon fall, Frank Mount stood up and proceeded to bang the table with his fist. As John reminds me, our dog Hunter – who was sleeping under the table – suddenly awoke, bumping into Carol who was somewhat nervous of canines. Hunter soon went back to sleep. And, alas, Saigon did fall.

One of the strengths of *Wrestling with Asia* is the author's account of how, following the withdrawal of Allied combat forces in 1972, the South Vietnamese Army did well in the field of battle. Until, following the fall-out of the Watergate scandal and the resignation of President Richard Nixon in August 1974, the US junked its promises to provide military support to South Vietnam against North Vietnam – which was supplied by the Soviet Union and supported by China. This issue is well covered in George J. Veith's *Black April: The Fall of South Vietnam 1973-1975* (Encounter Books, 2012).

## CONCLUSION – MUCH WISDOM AND TWO HELPFUL HINTS

There is much wisdom in *Wrestling with Asia*. Frank Mount states and re-states the crucial importance to Australia of the sea lanes of communication to our north, west and east. The author was correct to identify international communism as a threat to Australia up until two decades ago. And he is correct to point to the problem today of militant Islamism. Neither position was – or is – fashionable in the journalistic and public service areas in which Frank worked – as he documents in these memoirs.

In conclusion, there are at least two helpful hints in *Wrestling with Asia*.

- Frank gives advice on the best way to gatecrash a high level diplomatic function – there is a case-study of how he obtained entry to Harold Holt's wake in Government House, Melbourne in December 1967. Clearly "The Human Fly" has plenty of front. Or could he really be James Bond?
- Then, there is a lifestyle advice. At Page 176, Frank speaks warmly about the eight foot square, French style, double bed which he once enjoyed at the Continental Palace in Saigon. He comments: "From that day on, I have always bought a bed of about those proportions. They make life so much easier." Frank, whatever for? But, then, perhaps Frank Mount is James Bond after all.

Enough said. Thanks for the advice – and for the memories. I declare Frank Mount's *Wrestling with Asia: A Memoir* well and truly launched.

# RUSSIA TODAY – PUTIN AND HIS OPPOSITION

**Anya Poukchanski**

Recently, when Russian authorities denied protesters permission to rally against political repression on the basis that the country was free from political repression, no one was surprised enough to check what decade it was. The calendar showed November 2012, and the Soviet affectations were an increasingly regular trait of the Russian state.

In the 12 years since Vladimir Putin first became Russian president, a slew of laws restricting speech, electoral freedom and civil activity have come down from the Kremlin, via a parliament, the Duma, stacked with deputies faithful to the steely-faced leader. Registration fees and petition numbers for new parties have been raised and raised again; unfriendly media have been falsely prosecuted or harassed out of existence; voters have been coerced and carouselled from one polling station to the next with government endorsement; non-government organisations have been pulled into a labyrinth of administrative encumbrance. A single party – United Russia – has risen from nothing within one decade to a height at which it controls 70 per cent of Duma seats, almost every regional governorship in the country and holds the most members of any Russian political party since the Soviet Communists.

Then, for a moment in 2011-12, after years of this solidifying authoritarianism, big change had seemed imminent. Hundreds of thousands of protesters turned out all over the country to protest Putin's choreographed stride back into the presidency. After a superficial one-term prime ministership, to accord with constitutional limits, Putin had the Duma sanction an extension of the presidential term from four to six years, giving him an extra four years should he choose to serve out his next two terms as President.

The “non-participation” pact, in which the public adopted political apathy in return for material wellbeing and stability, had defined Russian politics since Putin's appearance on the political scene. Now, it was broken. Rallies in December 2011 were the largest since the demise of the Soviet Union. Participants

came from all walks of life, for the first time including members of the comfortable middle class. They demanded free and fair elections, political freedoms and, sometimes, Putin's resignation. It was not to be.

Instead, they got a refreshed and intransigent Putin. In the subsequent ten months, he had overseen laws forcing NGOs receiving overseas funding to carry a “foreign agent” tag on their materials; made further restrictions on the registration of new political parties; made criminal any speech about homosexuality; increased fines for unapproved protesting and passed a treason law imposing draconian penalties for non violent political involvement, such as Russian talking to a Western journalist about police harassment. The jailing of two members of the punk-rock band Pussy Riot, in August 2012, on the serious charge of “hooliganism” for their anti-government protest in a Moscow cathedral, was just the racy tip of the iceberg.

## **NO “COLOUR REVOLUTION” IN RUSSIA**

Since the colour revolutions began throughout Eastern Europe in 2004, Putin and his coterie have been terrified of a similar uprising in Russia. Yet in December 2011, at the height of a protest movement which commentators were calling the “Russian Spring”, the Russian authorities dithered, giving no clear signals about how they would address the unrest, unsure of whether to come down hard or try to defuse the situation by addressing some of the public's concerns. As it turned out, their prevarication served them ideally well. After one last surge on the 4 February 2012, the opposition movement began to crumble.

One could ask, what happened to the Russian opposition? A better question might be, why didn't a long term, Russian opposition happen? Russia has never had a viable opposition party because its government has never had an operational party system. Throughout the 1990s, the Russian party system was caught in a paradox: there was a vast number of candidates for office, but the substance of any contest between their policies and constituencies was thin. The electoral field was a volatile smattering of groups and individuals who changed their constellation from election to election, and sometimes in between. Of the 43 parties that contested the 1995 Duma election, only four cleared the five per cent threshold required to get a seat; all but eight of them had disappeared four years later. At the 1999 election, the pattern was similar: 26 parties in contention with only six achieving representation.

After Putin's first presidential term, however, the electoral landscape began to shift rapidly. A new party, constructed top-down by politicians in the tradition of the Russian “party of power”, began pulling in votes and high profile members. United Russia, built behind the scenes by Putin and his Machiavellian deputy, Vladislav Surkov, grew exponentially to become the hegemonic party.

## **AN ABSENCE OF EFFECTIVE DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION**

Because Russia's party system had splintered with the break up of the Soviet Union and reconsolidated functionally under the sole grip of United Russia, the country has never had effective democratic representation. In the 1990s, the constantly shifting party lines left Duma members free to pursue their own interests without being answerable to a stable constituency. By the time the next election rolled around, they would likely belong to a different party pushing a different agenda. In the 2000s, with the rise of United Russia, dominance of the political field freed members from the competition and accountability enforced by an opposition.

## **OPPOSITION PARTIES IN THE DUMA**

What of the opposition parties in the Duma? Three other parties currently hold almost half the seats in the Russian parliament. So, is it not then somewhat extreme to lament the lack of opposition power? This is the ominous and fascinating heart of Russian politics today - the fact that opposition parties are just as faithful to the regime as United Russia cadres themselves. These, and other "virtual opposition" parties have been created anew by the Kremlin for each election. These play a crucial role in bolstering Putin's control over every level of government. Designed to appeal to particular demographics, they channel the votes of those otherwise disaffected with United Russia into a group that is functionally one of its branches. This is how, despite a poorer showing in regional and national elections in the past two years, United Russia has maintained its grasp.

The precise agenda, leadership and origins of these parties is shadowy, but their effect cannot be denied. In the lead up to the 2003 election, the Kremlin constructed a party called Motherland which was calculated to siphon votes from the Communist Party. In the process, many communist-leaning activists and citizens were co-opted into cooperating with the regime.

At the same time, the Democratic Party, revived from its earlier form in the mid 2000s, absorbed votes from liberally-minded, cosmopolitan citizens. The Right Cause Party, founded in 2009, attracted pro-business and middle class voters who blamed the current regime for corruption. All were on the end of strings held in Vladislav Surkov's hands. A Just Russia, which currently holds 64 of the 450 seats in the Duma, was designed by Putin's inner circle to catch leftist, nationalistic voters turned off by United Russia's association with big business.

Ahead of the 2012 Presidential election, the regime seemed to expand the scope of its casting activities.

Billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov stepped into the race claiming to be an independent candidate with the business nous and liberal will to clean up the corrupt Russian state. Yet he was hounded by rumours Putin had asked him to run, or at least explicitly approved his candidacy, to serve as a pressure valve for an increasingly dissatisfied public.

The improbably shadowy talk of "party manufacture" actually reflects a practical process. In a country where media is almost wholly state-owned, administrative resources represent the bulk of political funding and authorities have fully subjective control over which parties they allow onto ballot forms, an official stamp is a free pass to the political mainstream. Understanding and having experience of conducting political organisations is almost wholly monopolised by those already in government. Groups not shaped and aided by existing power-holders have little to draw on and are likely to founder.

Two opposition parties currently in the Duma were not Kremlin-manufactured, but they have been reprogrammed to oblige. The Liberal Democratic Party has, since a bold debut in the early 1990s, retreated to voting consistently with United Russia and even co-sponsoring bills with them. There is speculation the LDP receives funding from the Kremlin. The Communist Party is the most established of the opposition parties and the least domesticated by the regime. As such, it saw its vote halve between 1999 and 2007, poached by minor virtual parties such as Motherland, the Agrarian Party and the Pensioners Party, which had been created entirely for that purpose.

The LDP contributed to its own demise with a scandal about its very unsocialist practice of selling party list places to oligarchs. Despite a resurgent vote in 2011, the party now votes with United Russia on all major pieces of legislation. Heaping effort into cataloguing and complaining about the hegemonic party's electoral abuses has caused the Communists to lose focus in their own campaigns. Yet they are not above using the same dirty tricks as United Russia - abusing patronage networks and state-owned resources whenever possible, undermining their claim to a moral high ground.

## **OPPOSITION OUTSIDE THE DUMA**

Outside the Duma, opposition forces are in even worse shape. Plagued by a culture of infighting and disorganisation, the movement debilitates itself with its cavilling, even before official repression steps in. Parties like The Other Russia have been repeatedly denied registration based on Putin-era electoral laws. But, even if granted, they would be unlikely to draw mainstream attention. These nebulous coalitions of

activists lack consistent messages, and their platforms tend to swing from liberal, to social, to nationalistic as they scrounge for support at the fringes of the political spectrum. At the height of opposition solidarity, during the Moscow demonstrations after December 2011, the two main opposition groups bickered about the content of their message and, for several months, held their protests at separate locations.

It does not help that such opposition comes from heterogeneous groups. Together, they are less a patchwork than a tinderbox, comprising nationalists, Stalinists, liberal democrats, gay rights advocates, ethnic minorities and neo-Nazis. All that draws them together is anger at Putin. In October 2011, this amorphous movement held elections for a “co-ordinating council”. In the 16 days of debates between candidates, the question “what is Russia’s greatest shame?” yielded responses as divergent as “television”, “allowing itself to be ruled by Asian means, like Turkmenistan”, and “poor living standards”. Many candidates had little understanding outside their pet cause, with one exclaiming, in answer to persistent questioning: “Judicial reform? That’s not in my competence. I don’t know. I don’t have a position.” In a country of 142 million, 80,000 people cast their votes in the co-ordinating council’s elections, and 75 per cent of the general population surveyed had no idea what the council was.

Clearly, the authorities freely harass and unfairly exclude political opponents. Police seem to be on standing orders to intimidate journalists unfriendly to the regime. This was the case when Investigative Committee chief Aleksandr Bastrykin apparently threatened to kill the deputy editor of the chief opposition newspaper, *Novaya Gazeta*, for his unfavourable coverage of the government’s handling of a crime-gang massacre. At most, they do things such as the case of allegedly kidnapping left-wing political aide Leonid Razvozhayev from the middle of his UNHCR political asylum application interview in the Ukraine. He was driven back to Russia and forced to sign a false confession. Police have repeatedly raided the homes of leaders of the December 2011 protests. Their other favourite ploy is to arrest key activists hours before a protest and hold them until its conclusion.

But it is equally obvious that repression is the authorities’ contingency measure, because the Russian opposition is a weak threat. Space and encouragement from the regime may have encouraged real parties to grow, but other countries have managed to sustain organised dissent in the face of much more forceful authoritarianism, such as Burma and South Africa.

## **MISSING – A RUSSIAN FUNCTIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY**

Russian opposition parties do not exist now because they never developed. At no point in Russian history was there a functional civil society in which independent political institutions could grow. Under imperial rule, political power did not extend past the palace. Civil space was strictly patrolled by the emperor’s secret police, the Okhrana. Censorship suffocated the emergence of independent political consciousness via newspapers, organisations or the arts. Any extant grains were smothered by the Soviet Union, which monopolised public space with the single ideology of Communism. Unlike other post-Soviet countries, therefore, Russia had no pre-existing culture of political parties to revive. Even more fundamentally, the vital breeding ground was bare of organised interests like an independent press or civil society organisations.

The memory of the communist state also left most Russians antagonistic and fearful of anything that recalled the “Party”. Yeltsin expressed this sentiment when he quit the Communist Party in 1990 and vowed never to join any party again. And then, the chaos and black marketeering of the 1990s left such vast financial resources in private hands that it was much easier for the powerful to achieve what they wanted without going through the impoverished state.

As for those Russians beneath them, the supposedly classless society, which emerged into a tumultuous capitalist world, is made up of erased categories and predetermined groups of interests, destroying their chances of aligning themselves into parties with shared goals. When United Russia began its rise, it could take advantage of this disorganisation to dominate the field, as well as draw on the support network of a group of already influential insiders – Putin, Surkov and their gang of former KGB “siloviki”. There is no doubt that Putin has built Russia into an authoritarian state. His state apparatus is persecutory and corrupt. But the problems of the Russian opposition stretch much farther back, and forward, than Putin’s brutal hand.

The hundreds of thousands who faced the deep freeze of winter to protest in December 2011 and February 2012 prove that Russians want an alternative. Until the opposition learns to build consensus within itself it cannot hope to represent them.

*Anya Poukchanski won the University of Sydney medal in Government and International Relations for her honours thesis about the rise of the United Russia Party*



# BOOK REVIEWS

John McConnell

**THE AUSTRALIAN MOMENT:  
HOW WE WERE MADE FOR THESE TIMES**  
BY GEORGE MEGALOGENIS  
Hamish Hamilton an imprint of PENQUIN BOOKS  
Pbk 2012 \$32.95  
ISBN 9780670075218

**M**ight Australia become a great country? A good question, don't you think?

The question drives to the heart of our values, how we perceive the national interest and our place in the scheme of things. It implies also that we should identify what holds us back as a nation.

Journalist, George Megalogenis, asks this provocative question in his new book: *The Australian Moment: How we were made for these times*. He stakes a big claim in the book. What if Australia is the West's last best role model?

Important economic reforms were implemented in the Australian economy during recent decades, reforms that added to the flexibility and productivity of the Australian economy. Our pragmatic version of deregulation has been to the national benefit. We now have a more versatile economy.

The "Australian moment", Megalogenis argues, can lead to national greatness provided we are prepared to keep growing. The author nominates the Whitlam Government's formal recognition of China and the slashing of tariffs by 25 per cent as the beginning of our transformation.

His story begins in 1973 and reaches to the global financial crisis and the Rudd stimulus packages. But

as George Megalogenis observes, the 1973 tariff cuts amounted to "sound theory poorly implemented". Whitlam's tariff slash was conceived in the face of rising inflation and delivered in haste.

It was the floating of the Australian dollar in 1985 that marked the birth of a new Australia: "It began the transformation," Megalogenis remarks, "that led, eventually, to Australia being the last rich nation standing as the global financial crisis mushroomed into the Great Recession in the twenty-first century".

Yet, instead of focusing on economic and social reforms implemented during the Hawke, Keating and Howard years, the author has chosen to embrace a timeline that extends back to 1973 – even while noting that "the collective policy failure of the Whitlam and Fraser era forged a consensus for deregulation".

An interesting feature of *The Australian Moment* is that Megalogenis re-interviews five of Australia's six previous prime ministers – Malcolm Fraser, Bob Hawke, Paul Keating, John Howard and Kevin Rudd – while Graham Freudenberg agreed to speak on behalf of Gough Whitlam.

Predictably, the former prime ministers jockey for their places in history employing competing narratives, and typically aiming to diminish the contribution of a "rival" prime minister who is not always one from a different political party.

George Megalogenis includes a huge amount of detail about economic indicators, such as budget outcomes and overall economic performance. Much of the discussion amounts to a narrative of Australia's economic history from the early 1970s.

Without doubt, the book is the product of thorough research. However, readers expecting a detailed exploration of the nature of the relationship between

the Australian Labor Party and the two reforming Labor governments, led by Bob Hawke and Paul Keating, will be disappointed.



Also missing is an exploration of what constitutes successful micro-economic policy reform. Crucial connections between reform programs and the “Australian moment” are left underdeveloped. Meanwhile, the author judges John Howard harshly.

Howard supported many of the economic reforms introduced by the Hawke and Keating governments – as indeed Hawke recognises in his interview with George Megalogenis. Not only did Howard support many reforms from opposition but later, as prime minister, he acknowledged the Hawke and Keating contributions.

Megalogenis argues that John Howard received full credit for the favourable effects flowing from the reform process, even though his contribution came at the tail-end of the reform process. The author also calls John Howard “disingenuous” over the GST. No matter that Howard placed the GST at the centre of the 1998 federal election campaign prior to introducing this particular tax reform.

Megalogenis argues that the Coalition would have won fewer seats, at the election in 1996, had voters realised then that the GST option was down the track. Megalogenis is also critical of the Howard/Costello policies that devalued Labor’s cultural agenda while increasing middle class welfare (the first home-owners grant and the baby bonus).

We are left with the question: might Australia be in danger of becoming a great country? As an open market and open society, “we are tapping the potential of the Asian ascendancy”.

George Megalogenis believes it’s time to grasp the Australian moment fully. It’s time to overcome our national tendency to self-doubt time to cast aside a reluctance to reflect, time to cease being “bludgers in prosperity”. Otherwise, we risk slipping back into the grip of mediocrity.

We need leaders willing to commit to continuing growth and change. The value of *The Australian Moment* is that it helps to focus attention on crucial

questions concerning Australia’s future prosperity. Unfortunately, *The Australian Moment* fails to draw all of the threads together into a clear and compelling argument.

### **SANTAMARIA’S SALESMAN: WORKING FOR THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC RURAL MOVEMENT**

**1959 – 1961**

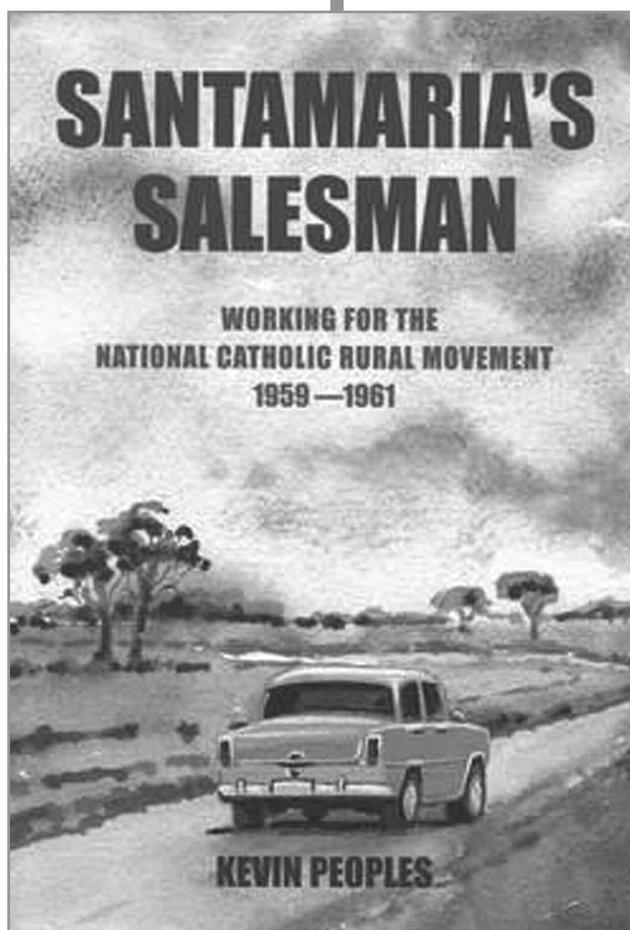
**BY KEVIN PEOPLES**

**John Garratt Publishing**

**Pbk, 2012, \$49.95**

**ISBN 9781921946165**

For three years as a young man, Kevin Peoples worked for B A Santamaria. Peoples felt important in Santamaria’s presence. He found it inspiring working alongside Santamaria; it was akin to receiving a visit from the “Holy Spirit”.



Peoples’ role for the National Catholic Rural Movement (NCRM) involved calling on farmers, mainly in Victoria, to sign them up as members. He had a flair for persuading farmers to sign up to the higher of two NCRM subscription fees.

Kevin Peoples had grown up in the Victorian town of Terang. Being Catholic, Labor and working class were integral to his identity. One day in 1960, he introduced his parents to Bob Santamaria during an NCRM convention in Warrnambool:

**On the final day of the 1960 convention, my mum and dad drove... from Terang to the Warrnambool race course to see their important son who drove around the state and even into**

**New South Wales in a new blue Holden and mixed with important people like bishops and Mr Santamaria. I introduced them to Bob and he told them what a magnificent job I was doing in restoring the fortunes of the NCRM.**

**The times were good. But it was all to fall apart the following year (1961). How to make sense of such an experience?**

Half-a-century has now passed and *Santamaria's Salesman* sets out to reconstruct the events that led to Kevin Peoples' lesson in life. His book is the product of considerable research and reflection.

The main story outline is clear enough. When he began working for Bob Santamaria in 1959, Peoples says he was a naïve young man, "prone to reckless, sacrificial acts". Then, from late 1960, without realising the full implications of his actions, Peoples – together with three Young Christian Workers' (YCW) associates (Fr John Molony, Dr Gerald Caine and Jim Ross) - became interested in setting up an adult movement of Catholic Action.

Essentially, they had embarked on a collision course with Santamaria. The key issue centred on conflicting visions of Catholic Action. They were to challenge Santamaria's authority within the NCRM. Santamaria effectively ran the NCRM. He was also leader of the NCC which was independent of the bishops.

In country areas, where there was no NCC presence, Santamaria used NCRM members in the fight against communism. Similarly, Santamaria shifted funds between NCRM and NCC accounts, also interchanging personnel on occasions. Kevin Peoples and his Ballarat-based friends were keen to establish, or take over, an adult movement of Catholic Action to operate according to YCW philosophy. The essential focus of such an organisation would be on personal development through individual reflection.

The "see", "judge" and "act" philosophy emanated from the YCW's founder, Fr Joseph Cardijn (1882 – 1967). To differing degrees, Kevin Peoples and his three YCW friends saw an opportunity to influence/adapt the NCRM in the direction of YCW philosophy.

At least one or two of the Ballarat group seem to have been planning to "bypass Santamaria". What Santamaria actually knew about the intentions of Kevin Peoples, Fr John Molony, Dr Gerald Caine and Jim Ross, in the lead up the 1961 NCRM convention, is the subject of some speculation in the book.

Kevin Peoples had told an NCRM official "that a further reason for the failure of the Rural Movement was our intimate links with Bob and the NCC." Santamaria concluded that the direction and control of the NCRM was under challenge. A formidable opponent, Santamaria responded predictably. It was he who analysed the nature of the challenges, defined the organisation's objectives, determined tactics and relied on highly-disciplined supporters to translate goals into outcomes.

At a tense NCRM convention in 1961, the attempt to chart a different course for the NCRM failed miserably. Without grasping fully what was happening, but realising that relationships had soured badly, Peoples resigned towards the end of the meeting. Direct contact with Bob Santamaria then ceased. So did all contact with his former NCRM colleagues. Kevin Peoples argues that Santamaria "blurred the lines between Catholic Action and politics".

Unquestionably, this is accurate but it applies equally to other sections of the Catholic Church. The whole area of Catholic Action had become murky and contested territory. In *Santamaria's Salesman*, Kevin Peoples exposes inconsistencies that had developed over time while setting out his thoughts as to what is acceptable and desirable in regard to official "Catholic Action" bodies.

It is difficult to know when Peoples reached all of the conclusions he sets out in *Santamaria's Salesman*. At one point, he claims that he was critical of the NCRM from the outset. It was not a genuine Catholic Action movement, he writes, because a key ingredient was missing, namely integration between action and spiritual formation. However, Kevin Peoples seems not to have queried the work he was doing, initially at least. He says that he did not do any serious thinking about such matters until the end of 1960.

More to the point, Peoples records that he was uncertain about most things including the nature of Catholic Action, how it applied to the role of the NCRM, the distinction between the NCRM and the YCW, and the role of the church and the Democratic Labor Party (DLP). So there are uncertainties as to when Kevin Peoples formed all of the precise views about Catholic Action that he details in his book.

Nevertheless, Kevin Peoples raises a number of valid criticisms while providing more information on the topics of Catholic Action and Bob Santamaria's evolving policies about the land. Considerable research and reflection have been invested in Santamaria's *Salesman*. Along the way, Kevin Peoples has advanced our understanding of events that transpired five decades ago.

*John McConnell is the author of several economics text books*



GERARD HENDERSON'S  
**MEDIA WATCH**  
 - INCORPORATING  
**SANDALISTA WATCH**

**COMRADE ALEX, COMRADE VANESSA  
 AND "THE STRUG" (AKA "THE  
 STRUGGLE")**

In his 1937 book *The Road to Wigan Pier*, George Orwell defended "the ordinary decent person" against "the intellectual, book-trained socialist". He wrote that the latter:

"... type is drawn, to begin with, entirely from the middle class, and from a rootless town-bred section of that middle class at that. ...It includes...the foaming denouncers of the bourgeoisie, and the more-water-in-your-beer reformers of whom [George Bernard] Shaw is the prototype, and the astute young social-literary climbers...and all that dreary tribe of high-minded women and sandal-wearers and bearded fruit-juice drinkers who come flocking towards the smell of 'progress' like bluebottles to a dead cat."

**THE SANDAL-WEARER OF DOUBLE  
 BAY**

Comrade Alex Mitchell is a middle class radical of his generation. For two decades in London, from the mid 1960s until the mid 1980s, Comrade Alex campaigned to destroy what he called the British capitalist system – and railed at the so-called capitalist press. During his days as a revolutionary, your man Mitchell fawned at the feet of such murderous dictators as Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi along with such terrorists as Yasser Arafat. Then, when the revolution did not take place, Comrade Alex returned to Australia and immediately took a job with the capitalist press in Sydney. When working at the Fairfax *Sun-Herald* early this century, he had an apartment at the fashionable *Overthorpe* in Sydney's fashionable Double Bay. There he was frequently

seen wearing fashionable sandals. In 2007 Mitchell left Fairfax, moved to the Tweed Valley and wrote his book *Come The Revolution: A Memoir* (UNSW Press, 2011). Now read on.

**THE LIFE AND TIMES OF COMRADE  
 ALEX - THE ABRIDGED VERSION**

Alex Mitchell was born in Townsville, northern Queensland in 1942. He was third of four sons born to James Mitchell and Lucy Mitchell (nee Wilesmith). Although atheists, Mr and Mrs Mitchell sent their sons to Sunday School at St James Anglican Cathedral in Townsville where Alex was confirmed and became an altar boy. James Mitchell worked in an insurance company, later ran a newsagency and also owned Better Used Cars. In other words, he was in small business. Educated at Townsville State High School, Alex Mitchell became a cadet reporter on the *Townsville Daily Bulletin* in January 1960.

On learning that a young newspaper proprietor named Rupert Murdoch had purchased the *Mount Isa Mail*, Mitchell headed to the Queensland town hoping to make contact with Murdoch. This he did – and, in time, Mitchell obtained a job with Murdoch's *Daily Mirror* in Sydney. By now, Mitchell was a fashionable leftist. In the mid 1960s, he was appointed to the *Daily Mirror's* bureau in the Canberra Press Gallery – where, as Mitchell concedes, the majority of journalists "were pro-Labor and pro-[Gough] Whitlam". Soon Mitchell joined the "Get Gorton Committee" which was targeting Senator John Gorton, the (then) leader of the Liberal Party in the Senate. In other words, Comrade Alex pretended to be a journalist when, in fact, he was a partisan activist.

When the Liberal Party-Country Party Coalition government defeated Labor Opposition (led by Arthur Calwell) in the November 1966 election, Mitchell was devastated. He approached Murdoch requesting a transfer to London. Murdoch refused but provided a reference. Arriving in London in

March 1967, Mitchell continued his activist left-wing journalism – initially on *The Sunday Times* (which he left in 1970) and later the Granada TV's *World in Action* program (which he left in 1971).

Around 1968 Alex Mitchell made a commitment to Leon Trotsky (1879-1940) and the Fourth International – which was set up by Trotsky in the late 1930s – and became captivated by the Irish-born Trotskyite Gerry Healy (1913-1984), whose dress attire included “dark socks and sandals”. AM soon decided that “Healy and his co-thinkers in the Socialist Labour League were the only ones offering pure Trotskyism, the contemporary ideology of socialism”.

As Robert Service writes in *Trotsky: A Biography* (Macmillan, 2009) Leon Trotsky was an “exceptional human being” in many respects. However, as Service demonstrates, Trotsky “revelled in terror”. Moreover, during his period of power in the Soviet Union from the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 until 1922, Trotsky “crushed opposition in party and trade unions” as he “carried out campaigns of bloody repression”. In 1921, as head of the Red Army, Trotsky was the architect of the suppression of the sailors’ mutiny at Kronstadt, near St Petersburg.

These days, Trotsky is perhaps best remembered as an opponent of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin who happened to be murdered by one of Stalin’s henchmen in Mexico City in 1940. But as Dmitri Vologonov wrote in *Trotsky: The Eternal Revolutionary* (HarperCollins, 1996), Trotsky “firmly believed, with Lenin, in the dictatorship of one party, and its monopoly on power, ideas and all decision making, the very factors leading to the emergence of totalitarianism”.

*Come The Revolution* contains no criticisms of Trotsky and the crushing of the Kronstandt workers’ uprising is not mentioned.

In early 1971 Mitchell signed on full-time with Healy’s SLL and joined the editorial staff of the *Workers Press*. The SLL later became the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP). Middle class Alex teamed up with the likes of actors Vanessa Redgrave and Gerry Healy to overturn capitalism. They failed. In 1986, Mitchell returned to Australia having being expelled from the WRP. Using the old mates network, he and his partner Judith White were immediately employed by Peter Smark as journalists on the Fairfax-owned Sydney Sunday newspaper the *Sun-Herald*. There Comrade Alex continued as a left-inclined journalist and columnist until quitting to become a freelance journalist in 2007.

## COMRADES IN ARMS? – ALEX MITCHELL & VANESSA REDGRAVE

On 27 October 2011, Alex Mitchell was interviewed by fellow leftist comrade Phillip Adams on the ABC Radio National *Late Night Live* program for an entire hour. It was a remarkably soft interview – a friendly chat between a once-upon-a-time follower of Bolshevik Josef Stalin and the Communist Party and a once-upon-a-time follower of Menshevik turned Bolshevik Leon Trotsky and the breakaway Fourth International, which was formally established in 1938 with the unrealistic aim of supplanting Stalin as leader of the international communist movement.

Towards the end of the oh-so-friendly conversation, Adams raised the matter of Mitchell’s failed marriages/partnerships with Livia Heidecker and Joy Pinnock. There are photographs of both women in *Come The Revolution* – as there is of Mitchell’s wife Judith White. On *Late Night Live*, the following exchange took place:

**Phillip Adams:** Marriage and career were a bit of a problem for you – wasn’t it?

**Alex Mitchell:** Well, it has been. But I was always, like a lot of people, I suppose, very committed to something – my newspaper. And you sort of end up being married to the newspaper rather than your partner. And, of course, I’ve now corrected this. And Judith, I hope, would understand I’m very much married to her and our future and career together. But in my earlier days, no, no. I always thought that part of life you had to sacrifice – and part of the sacrifice, maybe, you just had to devote yourself to “The Strug”. And “The Strug” came first, second and third.

**Phillip Adams:** The “Strug”. Oh dear....

Oh dear.

## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF COMRADE ALEX – THE UNEXPURGATED VERSION

Alex Mitchell is somewhat long on self-regard. *Come The Revolution* runs for a staggering 530 pages. As Ross Fitzgerald wrote when reviewing the book for *The Sydney Morning Herald*: “Mitchell’s memoirs may have been much better by half”. Or perhaps a quarter.

The illustrations give an idea of Comrade Alex’s megalomania. They include photos of (i) Alex’s confirmation certificate (1954), (ii) Alex’s first marriage (1962), (iii) Alex dancing in Sydney (1964),

(iv) Alex sleeping at his Canberra Press Gallery desk (1966), (v) Alex's partner Joy Pinnock and daughter Laura (1970) whom he effectively left the following year, (vi) Alex the public revolutionary speaker (four images) and (vii) Alex's exit payment from his Fourth International comrades in London. Yes – just a boring cheque for £40.

Here's an example of the tedious detail in *Come The Revolution* – a book in search of a tough-minded editor, if ever there was one.

- **Page 38.** Read all about Alex's (first) marriage:

**On 6 January 1962 I returned to Townsville where I married Livia at St Andrew's Church in Mundingburra, vowing that I would "love, comfort and protect her and be faithful to her as long as we both shall live". As the *Bulletin* reported in its Women's Section: "The bride chose a gown of ivory delustrated satin which had beauty of line through its simplicity. In front the skirt fell in smooth straight lines, the attention being focused on the back where a sweeping fishtail led to a flat Dior bow sitting below the waistline. The bodice..."**

Can you bear it? Hands up anyone who cares about the bride's sweeping fishtail train circa 1962. Especially since it was soon evident that the marriage would turn out to be shorter than the bride's gown.

- **Page 63.** Now read about Alex's 21st birthday:

**On 9 March 1963, my 21st birthday, Livia and I went to dinner at Chequers, where Shirley Bassey was in concert. She sang "What Now My Love", "I Who Have Nothing" and "The Banana Boat Song". We drank a bottle of the Australian bubbly *du jour*, Barossa Pearl and ordered steak Diane, which was covered in the blue flame of brandy sauce as it was cooked at the table.**

Can you bear it? Also, hands up all who really care where Comrade Alex's steak Diane, circa 1963, was covered in a blue flame of brandy sauce? Especially since the blue flame barely burned longer than the marriage. For, later that year, Livia "packed her bags and left" Comrade Alex – see Page 64. As Ms Bassey once put it: What Now My Love?

And the answer is Revolution and Leon Trotsky – Gerry Healy style. Let's pick up the oh-so-long story in 1967 (at Page 91) when Comrade Alex – having failed to defeat Harold Holt's Coalition government in Australia – arrives in swinging London and mixes with a conga line of sandal-wearing leftist luvvies.

Including Philip Agee, Roy Battersby, Robert Bolt, Tony Booth, Ian Charleston, Peter Cook, Tom Driberg, Paul Foot, Glenda Jackson, Tom Kempinski, Rachel Kempson (Lady Redgrave), Ken Livingstone, Ken Loach, Arthur Miller, Helen Mirren, Harold Pinter, Corin Redgrave, Vanessa Redgrave, Willie Rushton, Peter Sellers, Kenneth Tynan and Fay Weldon.

- **Page 93.** From London, AM reflects that "Harold Holt had drowned in Port Melbourne while surfing in December 1967". There is no surf in suburban Port Melbourne, close to the Melbourne CBD. Mr Holt drowned off Cheviot Beach close to Bass Strait while attempting to swim.

- **Page 94.** AM catches up with his ex, Livia, in the Hilton Hotel on Park Lane. Livia declares her dislike of pro-communist demonstrators marching through London. This had the effect of "closing a chapter" in AM's life. He has a "new soulmate", Joy Pinnock, who holds suitably leftist convictions. Right on – or as the songwriter might have written: "She's now my love".

- **Page 115.** AM declares his support for the communist cause in Vietnam and his admiration for North Vietnam's communist dictator Ho Chi Minh:

**I decided that if information ever came into my possession about America's war plans against the Vietnamese people, I would seek its publication in whatever newspaper I was working for. If the paper refused, I wouldn't hesitate to make certain it reached the hands of Ho Chi Minh and his followers. Is that "treachery"? I'd call it having the courage of your convictions. In any case, I wanted the Vietnamese to win.**

*Come The Revolution* contains no criticism of Ho Chi Minh's purges or re-education camps or of human rights violations under the Vietnamese communist regime.

- **Page 148.** AM admits to writing a soft piece for *The Sunday Times* on Berlin to appease the anti-communist attitudes of the powers-that-be at the newspaper. But Comrade Alex's heart is not really in it. He quite likes the communist rulers of East Germany, including East Berlin. As AM puts it:

**Eventually I produced something terribly unconvincing about the booming West Berlin economy and its bright future as a capitalist enclave next door to the grim Soviet bloc. I didn't believe a word of it.**

*Come The Revolution* contains no criticism of human rights violations by the communist regimes of Eastern Europe, including East Germany.

- **Page 150.** AM declares that, having travelled to Catholic Ireland, his “atheism became a whole lot more militant”.
- **Page 155.** AM criticises former British prime minister Tony Blair for “having bombed, shot and tortured” Iraqis during the Coalition of the Willing’s invasion of Iraq. There is no criticism of Saddam Hussein’s murderous campaigns against fellow Iraqis.
- **Page 201.** RM recounts how, in 1968, he makes his first contact with “like minded radicals” at the home of BBC producer Tony Garnett in North Kensington.
- **Page 203.** RM recounts how the audience at radical chic North Kensington, on hearing the ravings of Gerry Healy, was “enthralled”.
- **Page 204.** RM reveals that, on occasions, the radical Trotskyists met at Regent’s Park.

**On a couple of spectacular occasions we invaded the Regent’s Park mansion of accountant Michael Henshaw, who wore shoulder-length hair and appeared in a striking Oriental kaftan. Henshaw handed the private financial affairs of many politically committed entertainment professionals with disastrous consequences. He either failed to submit tax returns on their behalf or robbed them blind.**

- **Page 215.** AM reveals all about how he came to join the Socialist Labour League (which became the Workers Revolutionary Party) rather than the International Socialists (IS), the International Marxist Group (IMG) and the Revolutionary Socialist League.

**From the standpoint of genealogy, I was interested to discover that the SLL’s Healy, the IS’s Tony Cliff, the IMG’s Bob Penington and the RSL’s Ted Grant had all begun in the same trench of revolutionary politics after World War II, fought intense factional and organisational battles and gone their separate ways. I once asked Healy whether it would be worthwhile holding a reunification conference to bring the splinter groups together. He gave me a pained look and said, “We don’t need to have a meeting with them, Alex – we need to destroy them. They are an obstacle to the revolution”. I completed my analysis of the various tendencies of the Fourth International with the conviction that Healy**

**and his co-thinkers in the SLL were the only ones offering pure Trotskyism, the contemporary ideology of socialism.**

Fancy that – especially since no one knew what “pure Trotskyism” meant in Britain in the 1970s and early 1980s. Ditto today.

- **Page 221.** AM reports, without criticism, that his one-time hero Gerry Healy once threw *Sunday Times* journalist Lewis Chester “down the stairs”. Nice.
- **Page 226.** AM proudly depicts himself in 1971 “as a socialist, a republican and an atheist” but acknowledges that he needs training to become “a Marxist or a Trotskyist”.
- **Page 237.** AM describes how, within 18 months of joining the ISS, he “was at Healy’s side seven days a week”.
- **Page 237.** AM acknowledges that he has “begun to adopt the grammar of pure Trotskyism”.
- **Page 238.** AM agrees not to wear a “broad brimmed black hat” on the instruction of one of Healy’s political commissars who believes it is a “bourgeois hat”. Shucks.
- **Page 261.** AM declares that he and his fellow comrades are on “a war footing”. By now, clearly, AM is quite deluded about the power of Comrades Healy and Vanessa Redgrave.
- **Page 262.** AM sets out the aim of Healy’s Trotskyists:

**Drummed into us had been the Leninist lesson: “Without revolutionary theory, no revolutionary party. Without a revolutionary party, no revolutionary action.” And now we had the instrument for social change: a revolutionary socialist party to lead the working class and its middle class allies in establishing a new Britain based on a planned state economy.**

AM seems unaware that the British Labour Party attempted to set up a planned state economy after the Second World War. It failed.

- **Page 263.** AM describes the discussion which took place when Healy’s miniscule SSL was deciding on a new name:

**We canvassed Revolutionary Socialist Party, Socialist International Party, Marxist Workers Party, Workers Unite Party, Workers’ Rights Party and International Workers Party (UK). I argued for the Socialist Party. It was simple, direct and told everyone who we were and what we**

believed in. However, my proposal was buried in arguments about the parties of the past in Europe and North America which had called themselves socialist but, in essence, were riddled with the politics of class compromise and betrayal. ...Healy led a committee meeting which sifted through the various names. One that jumped from the pack was Revolutionary Workers Party, and there was general agreement that it carried the correct message. Having obtained a consensus Healy suddenly changed his mind, shifted the words around and gave us the Workers Revolutionary Party.

All this sounds like the Monty Python skit about the row between the Judean People's Front, the People's Front of Judea, the Judean People's Popular Front, the Judean Popular People's Front – the latter three entities being categorised as “splitters”.

- **Page 277.** AM boasts that he works “for the revolution”. He seems unaware that no revolution is in prospect.

- **Page 285.** AM's revolutionary paper *Workers Press* goes broke.

**Page 286.** AM reports that Joy Pinnock became upset with Healy's authoritarianism:

...Joy's political differences with the party erupted at a party meeting at Battersea Town Hall to discuss the expulsion of a group of organised disrupters. When the final vote came, almost 100 per cent of the hands in the packed hall went up, but a few didn't vote. Healy took the microphone and declared that the vote wasn't good enough. Everyone must vote for the expulsions, he shouted, it had to be 100 per cent of the meeting. It wasn't an issue on which any member could be neutral, he added. A second vote was taken and Healy got his 100 per cent. (Later at a party rally Healy electrified the audience when he declared war on anti-party cliques, delivering the memorable line, “We will split, split and split again!”, with his tiny fists waving in the air).

Joy was furious with Healy's authoritarian approach and his contempt for party democracy. I argued that the party needed to unite against the party wreckers who we had evidence were being directed by external political forces wanting to “get Healy”, take control and rewrite the platform.

Clearly AM, unlike Joy Pinnock, was happy to go along with Healy's authoritarianism. Moreover, he was becoming paranoid – imagining that external political forces were infiltrating the WRP.

So, like Livia before her, in 1975 Joy took her leave out of the partnership and headed back to Australia with the two children of the union. Meanwhile Comrade Alex committed himself to continuing “The Strug”.

- **Pages 303-304.** AM is charged by Gerry Healy to find out precisely how Leon Trotsky was murdered in Mexico City in 1940. Needless to say, AM implies that the United States, FBI might have been implicated in Trotsky's death – he likes conspiracy theories. AM spends some time at Trotsky's residence, which is now a museum, and reflects:

**I must confess that stepping into the open courtyard of Trotsky's last home triggered the same nerve-tingling response as my first visits to Westminster Abbey, the Louvre and the Lincoln Memorial. Standing in the presence of history, even if it is now rendered in cold stone, has a physical impact on the senses.**

- **Page 324-325.** It's time to praise Libya's Muammar Gaddafi. According to AM, Libya under Gaddafi became “the envy of people in other Arab countries”. AM even has a kind word for the ravings in Gaddafi's *The Green Book. Come The Revolution* contains no criticism of Gaddafi when at the height of his power.

- **Page 326-327.** In Libya, Comrade Alex Mitchell and Comrade Corin Redgrave, make a “pitch” for money. AM walks away with \$US 15,000.

**We were aware that al-Shahati's office was committed to giving money to political parties and popular movements who stood against colonialism and racism, and we made our pitch.... Al-Shahati admitted that this was the first time that Libya had hosted a delegation of Trotskyists and it was clear they were nervous about who we were and what we represented. Nevertheless, in a moment of embarrassing generosity he suddenly pulled an envelope from his drawer and said, “Here's [US]\$15,000 for your newspaper.”**

- **Page 327.** AM's been everywhere in the Arab Lands and he's met all the Palestinian leaders:

**I met the leadership of every Palestinian organisation – Yasser Arafat's Al-Fatah, George Habash's Popular Front for the**

**Liberation of Palestine, Ahmed Jibril's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (General Command), Naif Hawatmeh's Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Abu'l Abbas's Palestine Liberation Front, Samir Ghosheh's Palestinian Popular Struggle Front and Zayd Haydar's Arab Liberation Front.**

*Come The Revolution* contains not one word of criticism concerning the terrorist activities of various Palestinian organisations in the 1970s and 1980s.

- **Page 331.** Yet more money from Gaddafi's Libya. This time to publish English language editions of *The Green Book*:

**I helped draw up an agreement to publish tens of thousands of English language copies of *The Green Book* on our presses at Runcorn and also to print the official Libyan newspaper *Al-Zahf Al-Akhdar (The Green March)*. It placed an enormous workload on our small crew of printers, but it also provided a healthy revenue stream....**

- **Page 334.** AM states his support for the terrorist Provisional Irish Republican Army.

- **Page 335.** AM announces that the WRP "had become Colonel Gaddafi's revolutionary party in Britain".

- **Page 341-342.** AM, on a meeting with Arafat, is surprised to find that Healy and his fellow Trotskyists are more radical on the Middle East than Arafat himself.

**...we had been running a line which fully supported the PLO's armed struggle and the military defeat of Zionist imperialism. Arafat quickly disabused us of that approach. "We cannot defeat Israel militarily," he said. "Israel is too strong and we don't have the weapons, the army, the air force or the navy to fight them." And he added, "When you fight Israel, you fight the United States as well. Israel is the 51st state of the United States and we cannot fight America. It would be *magnoon* [crazy]."**

- **Page 344.** AM finds that the WRP's photographs of British intelligence agencies have found their way to fellow comrade-in-arms the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. *Come The Revolution* contains no criticism of Ceausescu's brutal dictatorship.

- **Page 345.** AM describes Arafat as "the most impressive figure" he has met in his journalistic career. *Come The Revolution* contains no criticism of the corruption of the PLO under Arafat's leadership.

- **Page 347.** AM become a "bestie" of London-based Iraqi Naji al-Hadithi:

**Obviously a party favourite, and close to the rising star of Ba'ath hierarchy, Tariq Aziz, al-Hadithi had been sent to London to use his diplomatic and media-skills to promote Iraq. He was more open-minded than the average surly Ba'athist so, apart from being the WRP's point man in London, we became firm friends.... Another door had opened for us in the Middle East.**

- **Page 350.** AM gives details of yet another Trotskyite delegation to Saddam Hussein's Iraq:

**The WRP delegation – Healy, Aileen Jennings, Vanessa Redgrave and me – were treated to first class seats on Iraqi Airways for the flight to Baghdad, where we were given a VIP welcome.**

- **Page 351.** Gerry Healy and Vanessa Redgrave get to meet Saddam Hussein:

**Clearly, a favourable word went up the line to Saddam Hussein, who was number two in the regime but effectively a strong man. On the eve of our departure Healy and Redgrave were invited to his palatial headquarters for a meeting.**

- **Page 366.** AM drifts towards Vanessa Redgrave.

**When I joined the Trotskyist movement in 1971 I was branded a Healyite, but by the end of the decade I was a "Redgravite".**

- **Page 368-369.** AM talks about the film *The Palestinians* - which also provides an opportunity for the WRP to obtain yet more money from the Arab dictatorships:

**The project arose from our discussions with Yasser Arafat in Beirut and Abu Jihad in his Bekaa Valley hideout, but it was made possible by the determination of three people: Healy, who saw the opportunity to put the WRP before a worldwide audience and raise funds, particularly from the Middle East; Battersby who wanted to show the potential power of the party's talented film unit; and Redgrave, whose political and emotional commitment to the Palestinian struggle was all-consuming.... The "stars" of his film were the Palestinians themselves and Vanessa Redgrave, who stole the show by dancing with a**

Kalashnikov held aloft in the final sequences of the two-and-a-half-hour documentary.

- **Page 373-374.** This time AM gets his audience with Saddam Hussein:

In a bizarre turn of events, I accepted the main award [for *The Palestinians*] from the Italian actress Gina Lollobrigida, who appeared in a stately gown with a swooping neckline. The festival award winners were given a special audience with Saddam Hussein, who praised the “humanity” of the filmmakers and the “universality” of their message. He said, “Some say that the forces of evil multiply as times goes by, but to our mind it is the forces of good which increase in weight with the passage of time. The forces of evil, incarnate in imperialism, are simply striving to gain an extra lease of life by engaging in unsavoury activities against humanity”. I was introduced to him later...a member of the WRP’s Central Committee, and his craggy face broke into a smile. “Please congratulate Miss Redgrave on her film. It should be shown all over the world.” He said I would be welcome to return to Baghdad at any time. “This is your home,” he said, as he squeezed my hand.

- **Page 376-377.** AM announces that this time the WRP has scored £50,000 from the Kuwaiti Royal Family for the rights to *The Palestinians*.
- **Page 377-378.** AM condemns “the Zionist clique”.
- **Page 380.** AM reflects on the WRP’s Trotskyists appallingly low vote in the 1979 British election:

**The party’s election result was worse than dismal – it was catastrophic. In Manchester Moss Side, Vanessa Redgrave collected 225 votes, or 0.66 per cent of the vote, and in Lambeth Central, Corin Redgrave received 152 votes (0.55 per cent). The total vote for all 60 WRP candidates was 12,631 (less than 0.1 per cent) out of a total 31,221,362 cast nationally. It worked out that each vote had cost us around £8 from our General Election Fund.**

- **Page 384-385.** AM tells how he got up and personal with Comrade Vanessa Redgrave – for a while, at least.

During these travels I turned from chaperone to protector and then confidante. We shared confidences that usually weren’t trafficked between WRP leaders and I learned more about her family life, the acting profession and her insecurities.... Working so closely with Vanessa over many years was like a highly charged adventure, and, I became enveloped with her aura, which was strangely mesmerising. There was a brief time when it turned into an infatuation. I corrected what I considered was an unhealthy state of affairs by veering the other way. I stood back and became critical, finding her unblinking all-or-nothing, do-or-die approach to the party and Healy himself hugely annoying. I had ridiculed the Stalinists for their slavish adulation of all things Moscow and condemned the Zionists for their “Israel right or wrong” approach. Hers wasn’t an outlook I intended to adopt and, as a result, our previous close friendship was replaced by a cool cordiality.

- **Page 386.** AM recounts his constant visits to the Arab dictatorships:

**Between 1976 and 1986 I was the party’s roving Middle East envoy. When one passport was choked with visas I replaced it with a new one. Four passports from their period show that I made 18 trips to Libya, ten to Iraq, eight to Lebanon, three to Kuwait and Syria, two to Egypt and Tunisia, and single visits to Jordan and Saudi Arabia.**

- **Page 391.** AM compares M15 in Britain with the notorious Stasi in East Germany. He terms M15, “Britain’s Stasi”. Unlike MI5, the Stasi was the enforcer of a brutal dictatorship by means of incarceration and torture.
- **Page 394-395.** AM recounts how the WRP’s new weekly newspaper *Labour Herald* soon ran into financial trouble and how the comrades have to present another begging bowl to the PLO:

**When *Labour Herald* became desperate for funding, Ted Knight flew to Tunisia to meet Arafat and Abu Jihad... At the conclusion of the talks, Arafat, speaking in Arabic, told one of his aides to arrange for 15,000 to be given to Knight. When the aide asked whether the 15,000 was to be in**

pounds or US dollars, Saleh Khalili, the organisation's man-at-large in London, interjected saying, "Pounds". Arafat expressed mock surprise....

- **Page 401.** On arriving in Iraq, AM finds that his past support for the Iranian Revolution and the mullahs in Tehran is causing problems in Baghdad:

**When Healy, Aileen Jennings and I arrived in Baghdad, it was obvious that reports of our effusive support for the Iranian revolution had preceded us. Appointments with senior Ba'athist officials were impossible to secure....**

*Come The Revolution* contains no criticism of the authoritarian theocracy which the Islamist militants established in Iran in 1979.

- **Page 410-412.** AM comments that the election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives in Britain was "as if a group of deranged, peeved, envious misanthropes had succeeded in taking over our country". He complains that the Thatcher Conservatives "brought their own brand of philistinism" and conducted a "cultural jihad". AM criticises democratic governments – but not Arab communist dictatorships.

- **Page 420.** AM reports that the WRP's Youth Training initiative came to naught:

I barely found a class in regular attendance at any of the centres. After a spurt of enthusiasm, teachers had lost interest in unpaid work and young people turned away and went back to hanging out in the streets, parks and arcades. The venture had been stillborn.

Still, AM learns no lessons from the WRP's lack of support in general and among the working class in particular. It's called denial.

- **Page 433.** AM begins to realise that the Trotskyist language of Gerry Healy and Michael Banda could not be understood by the general population:

**...the party leadership, of which I was a member, had changed the characterisation of the Thatcher government to a Bonapartist dictatorship. Healy insisted that the phrase be used in our front page stories, in editorials and party statements. My difficulty with the terminology was that our readers simply didn't understand what it meant. Many party members didn't either. More alarmingly, statements were written by Banda saying that Bonapartism**

**was simply a staging point and, as the miners' struggle intensified, it would produce "a rapid evolution within the Tory Party to fascism".**

- **Page 435.** AM also comes to realise that, unlike middle class radicals, the miners were not committed to spending their working life in underground mines.

**...my doubts and uncertainties grew whenever I had the opportunity to visit miners and have heart-to-heart discussions with them. What emerged absolutely clearly was that they had no confidence in the future of their own industry and that they believed digging coal from underground mines was a thing of the past. I didn't meet a single miner who wanted his sons to go down the pit.**

- **Page 450.** AM recounts the implosion within the WRP after Comrade Healy is accused by 26 women of sexual misbehaviour.

- **Page 455.** AM sides with Healy in the sexual assault/harassment controversy:

**...the claims of Healy's sexual depravity were a wild exaggeration. I deplore old blokes in raincoats flashing in public parks; and I don't like them asking young women (or men) to drop their clothing so they can get their rocks off. It makes my flesh creep. But to turn Healy's stupid and improper behaviour into a moral juggernaut to destroy his lifetime's work as a revolutionary socialist was an act of criminal bastardry in the interests of the class enemy.**

So here we have it. Those who accused Healy of sexual misbehaviour are criminals. As to Healy, well he had a revolution to get on with.

- **Page 456.** AM recounts how he found out that WRP "was in the throes of a financial crisis with debts of \$250,000" and "on the brink of bankruptcy". Over two decades it is evident that Comrades Gerry, Alex and Vanessa want to rule Britain but cannot even manage the affairs of a small political movement.

- **Page 467.** AM reflects on the damage to "The Strug" caused by the implosion within the WRP, including the expulsion of Healy for sexual impropriety:

**I left the meeting drained, angry, disillusioned and conscious that the struggle for Trotskyism in Britain had**

suffered an incalculable blow. With the expulsion of Healy, its foremost leader since World War II, its future was in doubt. He, more than any other person, had fought in the workers' movement to build a revolutionary party educated in the class treachery of social democracy, Stalinism and revisionism. Now the daily newspaper and the bookshops had been closed down, the college of education in Derbyshire was "on strike" and all the students sent home, and the party was drowning in debt. Could we possibly regather and rebuild?

• **Page 482.** AM adopts a grassy knoll approach to the split within the WRP and sees the hand of the government involved:

...I believe there were state-paid "plants" inside the WRP who also gave "a push to history", and the champagne corks exploded when the coup succeeded.

AM has no evidence to support his conspiracy and grossly overestimates the importance of "The Strug".

• **Page 486.** However, all is not doom and gloom and there's always the hope of a bailout from the PLO:

Vanessa Redgrave and I were delegated to re-establish contact with the PLO, explain the events which had shattered the party since July, and ask for a large donation towards our £250,000 fund.

On this occasion, alas, the begging bowl proffered by Alex and Vanessa is not filled.

• **Page 496-497.** Having split with Gerry Healy and Vanessa Redgrave, AM tries for one last conversation with Healy:

I decided that it was time I had a serious political discussion with Healy, who was now living in a house on West Road, Clapham, purchased for him by Vanessa Redgrave.... The meeting never eventuated, and I never saw Healy again.

• **Page 498.** AM considers his two decades as an ideological follower of Gerry Healy:

Political cretins used to carry placards denouncing us as "Healyites". They considered it a term of abuse, but we didn't. We were proud to be Healyites, because we saw ourselves as the true defenders of the Trotskyist faith. But Healy was a broken man. He had been politically assassinated

with the same callous cruelty employed by those who had conspired to drive an icepick into Trotsky's brain.

In other words, according to AM, the action of around two dozen women in alleging sexual impropriety by Healy can be equated with the brutal action of Ramon Mercader when he planted an ice-axe in Leon Trotsky's head. Nearly all of Trotsky's immediate family were killed on Stalin's orders. Healy died from a heart attack.

• **Page 500.** Comrade Alex decides to abandon Trotskyism and return to Australia. To fund the trip he takes around the begging bowl to his comrades at the PLO:

I had a meeting in the West End with the PLO's Saleh Khalili to tell him of him of my plans. I set out my profound concerns about the post-split party and why I believed it was time to reclaim the wreckage of my life and move on. To my surprise, he accepted my apprehensions about the parlous state of the organisation and said he was increasingly concerned about Healy's health. ...When he asked me how I was planning to return home, I told him I would borrow the money for a ticket from old friends. Khalili would not hear of it and, against my protestations, reached into his wallet and counted out £400. When I told him the ticket was only £300, he said, "The extra is for presents for your children".

### 536 PAGES - BUT NO MENTION OF MICK YOUNG (LIFE SAVER)

Comrade Alex's final reflection contains the message: "Surely the revolution will come". This suggests that, now aged 70, Mitchell still retains much of the inanity which led him to fall for Comrade Gerry and Comrade Vanessa (a millionaire signed up to "The Strug"). The surprising omission from Alex Mitchell's memoir is any reference to Mick Young (1936-1996) - a minister in Bob Hawke's Labor government, who saved Mitchell's life by rescuing him from drowning in the surf at Bondi Beach in February 1996.

If Mick Young, who was suffering from cancer at the time, had not acted bravely on that day then Comrade Alex's "The Strug" would have ended a quarter of a century ago - without writing a memoir which is long on self-regard but remarkably short on self-criticism.



# AMANDA FOREMAN

to deliver The Sydney Institute's

## Annual Dinner Lecture 2013

**DATE:** Tuesday 30 April 2013 **TIME:** 6.30 for 7pm

**VENUE:** The Sydney Convention Centre Parkside Ballroom

**DRESS:** Black Tie

**AMANDA FOREMAN** is the author of the award-winning best seller, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (Harper Collins UK; Random House US), and *A World on Fire: An Epic History of Two Nations Divided* (Allen Lane UK; Random House US). She is the daughter of Carl Foreman, the Oscar-winning screen writer of many film classics including *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, *High Noon*, and *The Guns of Navarone*.

Born in London and brought up in Los Angeles, Amanda Foreman was educated in England and attended Sarah Lawrence College and Columbia University in New York. She received her doctorate in Eighteenth-Century British History from Oxford University in 1998.

*Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* was a number one best seller in England, and a best seller for many weeks in the United States. Translated into twelve languages, it was nominated for several awards and won the Whitbread Prize for Best Biography. It inspired a television documentary, a radio play starring Dame Judi Dench; and the movie, titled *The Duchess* - starring Keira Knightley and Ralph Fiennes.

Foreman's most recent book *A World on Fire* has been optioned by BBC Worldwide. One of the least known great stories of British and American history, Amanda Foreman brings to life the people who were swept up in the American Civil War: generals, statesmen, society hostesses, spies, diplomats, nurses, journalists and adventurers, as well as ordinary soldiers fighting for both North and South. An unforgettable saga of huge personalities, tense diplomacy and torn loyalties.

"An extraordinary book . . . this is a tale never previously told."

Stephen Graubard, *Financial Times*

"Magnificent . . . provides a completely fresh perspective on the first great modern conflict."

Antony Beevor

